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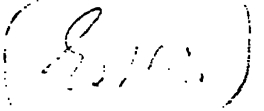

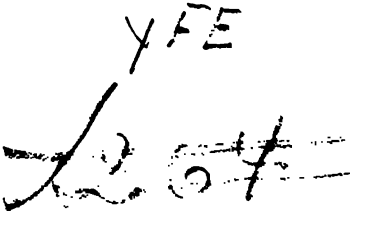

FAMILIAR LECTURES

ON

MORAL PHILOSOPHY:

BY

JOHN PRIOR ESTLIN, LL. D.

Nulla enim vitæ pars, neque publicis, neque privatis, neque forensibus, neque domesticis in rebus, neque si tecum agas quid neque si cum altero contrahas, vacare officio potest: in eoque colendo sita est vitæ honestas omnis, et in negligendo turpitudo.—CICERO, *de Off.* lib. i. 2.

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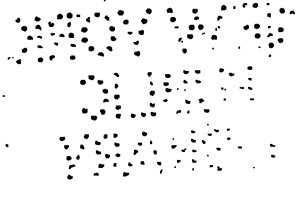

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LECTURE XXV.

HAVING considered the *social* duties of a *private* kind, or the duties which result from the principal relations in human life, whether natural or voluntary, we are now arrived at that part of our course in which we are to treat on *political* duties, or the duties flowing from the combinations of mankind into *larger* societies, bound together by common laws, under the direction of the same magistrates or governors.

Each relation, or private society, brings with it its peculiar duties or obligations. But there is *one* moral habit which is necessary to be cultivated in every society, both private and public, and of which all the other social virtues are branches,

namely, *Justice*, which is usually defined a *constant and strict regard to the rights of others.*

In order to have clear ideas on this interesting and copious subject, it is necessary to consider the nature of *rights*, of *laws*, and of *government.*

By a *right* then I mean, *authority from God, for the enjoyment of any particular thing, or for the performance of any particular action; that is to say, such an authority to enjoy the thing, or to perform the action, as to exclude the right of interference on the part of other men.*

Right and *Obligation* are reciprocal; that is, where there is a right in one person, there is a corresponding obligation upon others. If one man has a right to an estate, others are obliged to abstain from it. If Parents have a right to reverence from their Children, Children are obliged to reverence their Pa-

rents ; and so in all other instances. The rights of mankind ought to be well understood, and a practical use to be made of this knowledge. It is to be lamented, that it has often been abused. Men have been too apt to think on *their own rights*, and the *obligations of others*. This has laid the foundation of a selfish, dissatisfied, unsocial and turbulent spirit ; when the contrary effects would have been produced, if every one had directed his attention in a particular manner to the *rights of others*, and to his own *duties and obligations*.

Rights are natural or adventitious ; alienable or unalienable ; perfect or imperfect.

Natural rights are such as belong to a man, although there subsisted in the world no civil government whatever ; adventitious rights are such as a person possesses and holds by the institutions of society. Natural rights are a man's right

to his life, limbs, and liberty; his right to the produce of his personal labour; to the use, in common with others, of air, light, and water. If a thousand different persons, from a thousand different corners of the world were cast together upon a desert island, they would, from the first, be every one entitled to these rights. Adventitious rights, are the rights of a King over his Subjects; of a Master over his Servant, of a General over his Soldiers; a right to elect or appoint Magistrates, to impose taxes, decide disputes, direct the descent or the disposal of property; a right, in a word, in any one man, or particular bodies of men, to make laws and regulations for the rest. For none of these rights would exist in the newly inhabited island.

Rights are alienable or unalienable; that is, they are such as can, and may be transferred to others, and of which a person may suspend the exercise; or, they are such as cannot be transferred to others,

and which the possessor cannot avoid exercising upon proper occasions.

The right we have to most of those things which we call *property*, as houses, lands, money, &c. is alienable. The right of a Prince over his people, of a husband and wife to each other's confidence and affection; and the right to life, to health, to innocence, and the performance of moral and religious duty is unalienable. But of our unalienable rights the most important is that of worshipping God agreeably to the dictates of our own conscience, which, indeed, with more propriety, may be called *duty*, as the right is the right of God himself. As, however, our authority is derived from God, and no man or body of men has a right of interference, with respect to our fellow-creatures, it may be considered as a *right*, agreeably to the definition, although with respect to God, it is a duty of indispensable obligation. Rights have further been divided into perfect and imperfect. Those are called

perfect rights, which, being necessary to the *existence* of society, may be vindicated by force, or by legal prosecution. Such is our right to life, to health, to property, to reputation, to liberty; whence there is an obligation on other men, not to take our life, hurt our bodies, invade our property, or injure our reputation. The rights called, in contradistinction to the former class, *imperfect*, are necessary to the *happiness* of society, and in themselves most sacred, but cannot be vindicated by force or by legal prosecution. Such is a benefactor's right to the gratitude of the person to whom he has done good, the poor man's right to charity, and the right which all men have to the common offices of humanity. Perhaps these may with more propriety be *termed reasonable expectations, than imperfect rights*, as they cannot always be strictly defined, exactly ascertained, or legally enforced; although the ancient Persians enacted laws for the punishment of ingratitude.

Now these rights are founded upon the law of *God*, as discoverable by reason, and laid down by express revelation from him, and it is the great object of *human* laws to preserve these rights inviolate and in their full extent, as far as is consistent with the nature of civil society.

Law, in general, is a rule of action prescribed by a person or persons having a right to govern, commanding some things and forbidding others, with a promise expressed, or implied, of rewards or conveniences to those who obey, and a denunciation of punishment or inconvenience to those who disobey. It is therefore necessarily divided into two parts, *Precept* and *Sanction*. The rule of action is the precept, and the good promised and the evil denounced are the sanctions of the law. The law of *God* is the *supreme rule* which all human beings are bound to obey. Upon this as their foundation all human laws ought

to be erected. If in any case the laws of any civil community should interfere with this, they so far become null and void, being superseded by a higher obligation. The rules of action prescribed by the authority of the governing power of a particular political community are generally termed the *civil* or *municipal* law of that state, though the term *civil*, from *civis*, is often exclusively applied to the *Roman* law; and the term *municipal*, strictly speaking, denotes the particular customs of one single *municipium*, or free town; it is, however, frequently applied to any one *state* or *nation*, which is governed by the same laws. And in this general sense civil and municipal law mean the same thing. The definition of this law is the following: It is *a rule of action prescribed by the Supreme Power in a state, enforced by the sanction of human penalties.* The subject of civil law is every human action to which such fixed public regulations can be applied, as would introduce fewer inconveniences, than would

flow from its being left to every man's arbitrary will. As all power is liable to be abused, and as mankind are too fond of exerting it when they have it, forgetting that power and right are different things, and that no man, or body of men, can have a right to do what is wrong, it is possible that in the best regulated states laws may be too numerous, and may be extended to cases in which the good of society did not require their interposition. This observation may, perhaps, be applied to many laws which are made in some of the states in Europe respecting Religion, and Trade, and Commerce. In all cases, however, where they do not interfere with the Law of God, they must be submitted to until they are repealed by the same authority which enacted them. It is requisite to the essence of a law that it be made by the Supreme Power. Sovereignty and legislature are indeed convertible terms, and one cannot subsist without the other.

This will naturally lead us into an inquiry concerning the nature of civil Government — its various forms, and what form is best calculated to secure the happiness of a state; for it is a principle admitted by all who have directed their attention to this subject, that the happiness of the People is the end of all Government, and in every inquiry of this kind we must keep our eye steadily fixed on this rule, "*Salus Reipublicæ suprema lex esto.*"

The subject of Government has employed the pens of some of the first writers that the world has produced. Several great Philosophers and Philanthropists have exerted their abilities to invent such schemes of civil policy as might best secure the rights and promote the welfare and happiness of mankind. But most of these schemes, however plausible in theory they may appear, have been found, either incapable of being

reduced to practice, or, in fact, not productive of those good effects which at first view they seemed calculated to promote.

The principal sources of error in this respect, seem to be the two following. Some of those who have laid down plans of civil power, have considered mankind, not as what they really are, but as what they could wish them to be, and others have written with minds prejudiced in favour of some particular system, the inconveniences of which their partiality would not suffer them sufficiently to attend to.

It is the design of the remainder of this, and a future lecture, to collect into one short and comprehensive view, the peculiar advantages and disadvantages of the several simple forms of civil Government, whence it will be more easy to discover which of them, or rather what particular combination of them, is best adapt-

ed to answer the great end of all political society, the Good of the People.

But before we consider what *form* of Government is best calculated for the happiness of a People, it is proper that we enquire a little into the necessity there is for Government in general: and this will appear manifest from taking a slight view of the inconveniences attending a *State of Liberty*, or as it is often, though improperly called, a *State of Nature*.

Before any kind of Government, except the *parental*, had taken place in the world, all men, being upon an equality, and every person having a right to judge of the injuries which he had received, and to punish the offenders himself, it may reasonably be expected, that continual disorder, confusion, and strife, would subsist among mankind. It is true the *Law of Nature* is a just, benevolent, and reasonable rule of action; but in the interpretation of it,

self-love, prejudice, and passion, would naturally bias the judgment. And as the *executive* as well as the *judicial* power of the Law of Nature is equally vested in all, it is natural to suppose that where strength was not wanting, *Revenge* would too often execute that sentence which passion or prejudice had pronounced. Besides, if, when disputes and contentions arose, each person were *willing* to submit to the calm dictates of *unprejudiced Reason*, such is the imperfection of our nature, that even the best men might *differ* in their sentiments concerning right and wrong, and when this was the case, who must determine between them? If, indeed, all men possessed that meek and peaceable spirit which inspired Abraham, when a strife arose between *his* servants and those of Lot, then every person might live in peace and security without the restraint of laws and government. But as this would not be the case; as disputes and contentions would frequently arise, and different sentiments

concerning right and wrong subsist among mankind, men would be disposed to give up some of that liberty which they naturally possessed, especially the power of avenging *their own* injuries, and establish certain *laws*, by which all their disputes should be decided. But when these Laws were admitted, it would still be necessary that some *unprejudiced person*, whose integrity and probity were well known, should be appointed by the Community to *judge* when they were violated, and to *pronounce the sentence* they decreed: for Prejudice would often bias those persons in the application of them whose interest was immediately concerned. There would still further be wanting a Power sufficient to *enforce* the sentence of the Judge: for in a state of Liberty it might often happen that one of the parties would not *submit* to the sentence of an Arbitrator, unless impelled by force. These then are some of the circumstances which would induce men to enter into civil communities: and they would soon find that by

these means they were better defended from *external injuries*; — that every individual enjoyed his property in greater peace and security; — that those arts which tend to improve and adorn human life were better cultivated; — that the social affections had more room to exert themselves, and that they were better furnished with those enjoyments which are suited to the nature of rational beings. These are the advantages of government, to the security of which we may see, from what has already been said, that *three* species of *Magistracy* are necessary in every state; namely, a *legislative* magistracy, the business of which is to *make* the Laws; a *judicial* magistracy to *examine* into the nature of all controversies, and to *determine according* to the Laws; and a *military* magistracy, by which is only meant a Power vested somewhere *to oblige all persons to conform to the sentence of the judicial Magistrate.* In every well regulated State, there is likewise a

necessity for a *fiscal* Magistracy which must be employed in raising and paying out the public treasures, and a *fecial* Magistracy to form alliances with *foreign* nations, and to judge of wrongs committed by *other* states, against the society or its members. If it be asked, in which of these is the *Supreme Power* lodged? I answer in the *Legislative;* for that which enacts laws for all the rest must certainly be *supreme.* However that state in which the *legislative* and the *executive* powers are wholly in *different* hands must be badly constituted; for though the *legislative* power be in its own nature *supreme,* yet if it have not the others in some measure connected with it, it will be of but little importance to *make* laws, as the *executive* power will often be too strong for the *legislative.* On the other hand, if the power, both of *making* and *executing* the laws, be in *one* person, or in any one of the Estates of a Kingdom, the Government is then a *Tyranny.*

Supreme Magistracy, therefore, is that which exercises all sorts of Government in its highest instances, and from which no appeal can be made. The necessity of lodging this somewhere, appears from the confusion which would certainly arise from the great branches of civil power having no common *Nexus* to unite them, in prosecuting the same ends by the same means. Now, when this power is lodged in the hands of *one* Man, that Government is called a *Monarchy;* when it is committed to a *few* persons of eminence, it is an *Aristocracy;* and when it is lodged in the *whole* people, it is a *Democracy.*

Monarchy may be either *absolute* or *limited; hereditary* or *elective; during life* or for a *certain time. Aristocracy* likewise admits of the same variety.

Democracy is either when *all* the freemen of the State, with equal right of suffrage, form the *Supreme Assembly;*

or when they do not *all* meet in person, but choose a *few* to be their *Representatives*; though the latter inclines a little to Aristocracy.

These are the principal *simple* forms; the *compound* forms are almost innumerable. What particular combination of them appears to be most conducive to the ends of Civil Government, will be the subject of a future Lecture.

LECTURE XXVI.

THE business of the present lecture is to inquire what form of civil Government is to be preferred as generally most subservient to the happiness of mankind.

As man is a being formed for society, and as society cannot subsist without *Order* and *Rule*, which is *Government*, some sort of Government must take place wherever human beings are found together. But as *certain appropriate means* must be made use of to produce certain ends, so *all* forms of government are not *equally* productive of the same beneficial effects. It is therefore worthy our attention to inquire *what that form is* which has the most and the greatest

advantages connected with it, and under which the greatest Order and Rule may be obtained, with the least loss of natural Liberty.

Pope indeed says, "Whate'er is best administered is best." But if a People can be rendered happy under a *bad* form, by the prudence and fidelity of those in whose hands the *administration* is intrusted, there is no reason to doubt that they might be made much more so, under a *good* one, with the same wise and upright administration.

To discover what particular form is preferable to the rest, it is necessary that we know what those advantages are which the best government secures;—and they are *Unity*, which includes *Order*; *Fidelity*, or such a regard for the good of the public as would influence governors to sacrifice their own private interest to obtain it; *Wisdom* in discovering *those means* which will best promote

the public happiness; and *Secrecy* and *Expedition* in putting them into execution.

Let us see how many of these advantages an *absolute hereditary Monarchy* secures, and what are its inconveniences.

When the supreme power is lodged in the hands of *one* Man, there may be *Unity*, *Secrecy*, and *Expedition*; and if *Fidelity* and *Wisdom* could be secured, this form of government would be preferable to all others. An absolute Prince, if faithful to the trust reposed in him, and possessed of perfect wisdom, would have more opportunities of promoting the happiness of his subjects, than he could possibly have, if his power were limited. Influenced only by a regard to the interests of his people, he would never suffer the injured to go unredressed, nor the sons of violence and oppression to escape with impunity. His wisdom would enable him to remedy those in-

conveniences which are inseparable from all general laws, and by the Secrecy and Expedition with which his designs might be executed, he would have it in his power to promote the peace, order, and happiness of the whole Community over which he presided. The government of such a prince would bear a resemblance to that of the Supreme Monarch of the Universe, all whose laws are founded in perfect wisdom, and the great end of whose Government is the Happiness of the whole system of Beings.

But as Man is by nature imperfect, incapable of always discerning what is best, and liable to be influenced by the worst of passions, it is highly dangerous to invest a *single* person with absolute, uncontrolable power. Few, very few are born with abilities for Empire. For this situation a greater share of wisdom and discernment is necessary than is generally allotted to Mankind; and the splendour of so exalted a station,

and the many temptations to which it is exposed, are apt to dazzle the eyes and conquer the good resolutions even of the best of men. An absolute hereditary prince will, from his infancy be a stranger to the voice of Truth, and accustomed only to flattery and dissimulation. This will lead him to consider himself as a Being of superior order to other men: he will forget that his power was given him to be exercised only for the good of his people, and will look upon his own interest as distinct from that of his subjects. And when the principles of an absolute prince are once corrupted, there are no species of Tyranny and Oppression which he will not practise. Witness the cruelties committed by Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and other Roman Emperors: witness the instances of injustice, cruelty, and oppression which the histories of all despotic governments abound with. If, in order to secure a succession of wise princes the Monarchy be *elective*, there will still arise

as many inconveniences to overbalance this advantage. For nothing but faction, discord, and the most bloody civil wars will take place at the death of every Monarch. And even here there can be no security for *Fidelity*, as it would often happen that the Sovereign would be more solicitous to enrich his own family than to promote the interest of the state. An absolute Monarchy therefore, of whatever kind it be, is productive of very bad consequences, and highly unfavourable to Liberty. The best species of Monarchy is an *hereditary limited* one, where the supreme power is virtually in the Laws, and the administration of them in the Monarch; though this is rather a mixed form. Let us now consider what are the advantages and disadtages of an *Aristocracy*.

An *unmixed hereditary Aristocracy* will be attended with the same inconveniences as a Monarchy, without partaking of its advantages; for unless the number

of senators be very small, it is impossible there should be *unity, secrecy, or expedition.* The only advantage that can be expected from such a form is *fidelity*, so far as relates to guarding the state from foreign invasions, and preventing disturbances and seditions among the people: but the motive which will *influence* the nobles to provide against these, is not a regard to the interest of the people at large, but a concern to secure their own property and power. *That* fidelity which consists in regarding the good of the community before any private advantage, is not to be expected in an Aristocracy. On the contrary, the greatest oppression and severity will be exercised towards the inferior members of the state. The principal concern of the nobles will be to secure their own influence and authority: they will stand by one another in opposition to the commons, and the greatest part of the nation will become their vassals. The only difference between this form of government and an

absolute monarchy is, under the latter there can be but *one* tyrant, but under the former there may be *many*. In a word, *an absolute Aristocracy* is calculated to bring a people under the most abject subjection, and not one of those advantages which constitute a good government can be expected from it. It is, therefore, the worst form of any.

If instead of an *hereditary*, it be an *elective* Aristocracy, nearly the same inconveniences will be experienced. For the power of choosing the nobles must be either in the senate or in the people. If the election be made by co-optation of the senate, there will be nothing but faction and discord in the supreme assembly, and every new senator will be chosen out of some of the principal noble families; till at length there would be a probability of the government degenerating into a *perfect monarchy*, or rather *tyranny*. If the choice of the nobles be in the *people*, it is not properly an *Aristocracy*, but a species of *Democracy*.

Such a form would certainly be preferable to an *hereditary Aristocracy*, but even here, *unity*, *fidelity*, *secrecy*, and *expedition* cannot be secured.

There have been but few governments in the world purely aristocratic. Those of Genoa and Venice partook most of this character, though in both these states there was a supreme magistrate with the title of *Doge*, or Duke. His authority, however, was very small, as the whole legislative power, as well as the administration, was vested in the senate, so that these governments may be considered as examples of Aristocracy.

The people of Genoa were frequently harassed by civil wars. The Venetians, indeed, continued for a long time without any remarkable tumults; but their quiet seemed to arise principally from this circumstance, they are so situated that a foreign enemy cannot easily attack them, and, to prevent contentions among the nobles for places of profit, all their votes were given by ballot, which was perform-

ed in such a manner as to prevent all possibility of bribery and corruption.

However happy the Venetians might think themselves under their Government, an Englishman, who has experienced what true liberty is, would not feel himself easy under such a constitution. The *State* Inquisition which existed here, was extremely severe. None of the *common people* durst even mention any thing that concerned the state, and even the Nobles durst not interfere in matters of a political nature, except when they were met in council. This form of government, therefore, though perhaps the best species of Aristocracy, is not calculated for a people in whose breasts a spirit of freedom reigns.

Since then neither a *simple Monarchy* nor *Aristocracy* is productive of the advantages which are necessary to constitute a good government, let us now see if they are to be found in a *Democracy*.

When *every Freeman* of the State has a right to vote in the Supreme Assembly, there is no doubt but there will be the greatest *Fidelity*; as every man will consider the interest of the public as his own: but on the other hand, every other advantage will be wanting. It is impossible that there should be *Unity* in a council composed of so many members. Nor can *Wisdom* be expected in it; for the views of the generality of mankind are confined within very narrow limits. They are incapable of discerning what is best, and are liable to be influenced by men of popular and persuasive abilities, to act directly contrary to their true interest. This was often the case at Athens, and Philip, taking advantage of it, procured some of the Athenian orators to work upon the minds of the people, in such a manner as to make them favour his schemes, at the same time that they thought they were acting consistently with their own welfare. The best speakers are not always the wisest and best men,

and in a government purely popular, the man who can talk with the greatest fluency, will gain the ascendancy over those who are superior to him in every other attainment.

Unless the state be very small, it is impossible the people should meet together without the utmost confusion. This inconvenience the Romans often experienced; and whenever any person among them wanted to succeed in his attempt, he had nothing to do but to gain the greatest *mob* on his side, and he was sure to be successful. The history of ancient Rome, of modern France, and many other countries, shews the great danger there is of a perfect Democracy, or a form as near it as can exist in a large State, terminating in a *Military Despotism.*

There have been few governments in the world which were *purely democratic.* That of *Athens* was more so than that of

Rome, although the Freemen at Athens, bore a small proportion to the number of strangers and slaves, and were looked up to as possessing a kind of Nobility. The *Comitia Centuriata* instituted at Rome by Servius Tullius, partook in a very high degree of the spirit of Aristocracy.

In fact, the only species of Democracy which can take place in a large state, is when the Supreme Power is lodged in the hands of a certain number of persons appointed by the community, and who are their representatives. In such a form, it is probable that *Wisdom* and *Fidelity* will be secured, but still *Unity*, *Secrecy*, and *Expedition* will be wanting, and the road will be open for Seditions and Commotions, and a spirit of party without restraint.

Nothing has yet taken place in the Representative Government of America, (which indeed has not existed long enough to be considered as a fair experiment,) which can justify us in drawing a con-

clusion different from that which has just been laid down. However plausible such a Government may be in *theory*, it still remains to be shown that it is in *practice* most favourable to the peace and comfort of domestic life, to the improvement of the arts and sciences, to refinement of taste, expansion of intellect, and to energy and dignity of character. Let it not be forgotten that the exalted character which claims our highest admiration, the characters of great, though inferior merit, which we likewise admire on that Continent, were formed under the old system.

All the *simple* forms then have many inconveniences attending them, and are not sufficiently adapted to answer all the purposes of Government.

Since, therefore, this is the case, we must have recourse to some combination of these, in order to secure those advantages which are wanted in the simple forms. And the best Constitution seems

to be a *mixed hereditary Monarchy* consisting of all the three states in their purity, and where the *legislative* power is vested in them all *jointly*; the *administration* in the *Monarch*, and the power of *granting supplies* raised by the subjects in the *Representatives of the People only*.

In such a mixture, the chief advantages of all the simple forms are secured, and their chief disadvantages avoided.

But where does there exist so regular, so excellent a system of civil Government? Happily for *us*, we need not wander into foreign climes to seek it, nor read either ancient or modern history to contemplate it. We ourselves live under it. This is that Constitution in its original principles of which we hear so much. May it be preserved in its original principles! Those are its best friends who wish it *health*, not those who, while they talk so much about it, are endeavouring by all the methods in their power to un-

dermine it. If abuses have taken place, let them be distinguished from the Constitution, which supposes the House of Commons to be the real representatives of the People, and upon all occasions to declare their sentiments. As this beautiful system is a very different thing from its abuses, it follows that those who admire the one cannot approve of the other. In speaking on this subject, an Englishman may be suspected of partiality, but Delolme, a foreigner, has written a large work on the Constitution of England, and Montesquieu, in his Spirit of Laws, expresses himself in these words. "Here," says he, "is the fundamental Constitution of the English Government. The *legislative body* being composed of two parts, one checks the other by the mutual privilege of rejecting. They are both checked by the executive power, as the executive is by the legislative. These three powers would naturally form a state of repose or inaction. But as there is a necessity for movement in human affairs

they are forced to move, but still to move in concert."

Perhaps a Philosopher in his closet, might invent a form which in the refinement of theory might appear superior to our own. But it is dangerous to make any considerable alterations in a state because the reasons *à priori* in defence of some other plan of government might appear to carry with them some plausibility. For it often happens that what in theory has this appearance, when put in execution, is productive of fatal consequences, not before perceived. And great and sudden changes, especially if effected by violence, are attended with mischiefs incalculable. A reform of *Abuses*, indeed, is to be wished for, that we may experience the benefits of the English constitution, with which every reasonable person will be content. "Harrington," says the celebrated writer I have just quoted, "has, in his *Oceana*, inquired into the highest point of liberty to which the con-

stitution of a State may be carried. But of him it may be said, that for want of knowing the nature of *real* liberty, he busied himself in pursuit of an *imaginary* one, and that he built a Chalcedon, when he had a Byzantium before his eyes."

The institution of Juries; the provision which is made for the impartial administration of Justice; the freedom of the Press, and the security of civil and religious Liberty, are circumstances connected with our constitution, of which an Englishman has reason to boast, and for which he cannot be too thankful. Our insular situation, by which we have been preserved from those wars which have so often deluged the continent of Europe with blood, is another ground of thanksgiving to Providence and of attachment to our country.

The account which has been given of the origin and nature of *rights, laws,* and

government, and of the genuine principles of the English Constitution will, without any particular enlargement, suggest our duties as citizens, and our obligations to practise them. Our duties in few words are, Obedience to the Laws of our Country, peculiar attention to what is required of us in that station which we fill in society, a readiness to bear our part in the expences and dangers of the state, an ardent love of Liberty, and Public Spiritedness or Patriotism, which consists in preferring the Interest of our Country to every partial attachment. To these duties we are bound by every tie of interest, gratitude, and benevolence; and by every consideration which can affect us as Men, as Britons, and as Christians.

LECTURE XXVII.

BEFORE I dismiss the subject of *Social Morality*, one Virtue remains to be considered more at large, as it lies at the foundation of all society, and is the first principle of Morals; I mean *Truth*. Previously to the consideration of the nature and indispensable obligation of this prime virtue of social life, I shall lay before you some observations on its opposite vice, *Falsehood*.

To begin then with the nature of a Lie, I observe that it consists in *declaring a thing to be true which we believe to be false, with an intention to deceive*. Now as it is possible to convey our sentiments to others by *actions* as well as by *words*, it follows that we may incur the guilt

of this crime, not only by our words, but also by our actions. If we keep this definition in our thoughts, we shall be enabled to perceive all the possible methods by which we may convey a wrong intelligence without being chargeable with a wilful falsehood, and consequently know what the laws of Truth require, and how ineffectual are all attempts to evade them. "A Lie, then I say, consists in declaring a thing to be true which we believe to be false, with an intention to deceive." All these circumstances must be united before a man can be justly charged with this breach of morality. If a person *believes* a thing to be true, and *relates* it as such, which in fact is not so, he is *mistaken* indeed, but he may nevertheless be innocent. In this case he himself is deceived, and consequently may deceive others with the most upright intention. Through the imperfection of human knowledge it frequently happens that the best of men assert a falsehood; but so long as they

themselves believe the truth of what they assert, and have a design to *inform*, and not deceive others, their veracity remains unimpaired. It is true persons may be highly blameable in taking a thing for granted, and spreading a report of it, upon slight and trivial grounds; but then their fault consists, not in *violating their word*, but in credulity of temper, rashness of speech, or hastiness of decision. And as it is possible, through ignorance and mistake, to assert a falsehood without incurring the guilt of a lie, so on the contrary, it is possible to be deeply involved in this guilt, at the same time that we assert what is really true. If, for instance, a person declares a thing to be true which he believes to be false, though in the event it should chance to fall out as he had said, yet as he believed the contrary, and meant to deceive, he is, in the sight of God and in the judgment of reason a Liar. Again, as Truth lies in the *substance* of the thing represented, and not in the *form*

of representation, and as custom has affixed a determinate meaning to particular phrases as well as words, it is possible to convey to others the knowledge of a truth in words which, literally taken, are false. It is upon this principle that we vindicate the use of Parables and Allegories, and all figurative modes of expression. In these cases, there being no intention to deceive, there is no ground to impeach our veracity. We may speak *figuratively* and yet speak *truly*: we may speak *literally*, and yet in such a manner that the gesture and accent shall alter the meaning, and be known to do so by those we converse with. The great rule therefore is, that we use these signs in their customary signification, and that we desire to be rightly understood. Nor is even an *intention to deceive simply* and *of itself* in *all cases* criminal. If there be *no falsehood* uttered for this purpose, and people have *no right* to be informed of the truth; and if we do not, either by words or signs, signify an intention of

giving them this information, we may with innocence deceive them, or more truly suffer them to deceive themselves. Thus, if a robber supposes we shall go a certain road to a certain place, we may intentionally deceive him by taking a different path, or by not going at all. If we know that some impertinent people, who officiously pry into the concerns of their neighbours, have formed wrong notions of our schemes and intentions, we may *purposely deceive* them by acting contrary to their expectations. It is by no means incumbent upon us to acquaint the whole world with *all* we know. We may in many cases be silent, though we are convinced that our silence will be wrongly interpreted. The general rule by which we should govern our conduct is this, when we speak, or profess to communicate our sentiments, at all times, both by our words and actions, to declare *the truth*, but we are not obliged in all circumstances, and upon all occasions, to declare our sentiments to others.

I observe further that we may be guilty of a violation of veracity, not only by giving a false report of what is *past* with an intention to deceive, but by making *promises* with respect to something *future* which we never mean to perform. But here likewise it is necessary to be particularly cautious and accurate. A *Promise* is not the same thing as *expressing an intention* or a *resolution*: one relates only to *present*, the other to *future* time. When a person communicates to you his *intention*, he tells you only the *present* state of his mind. In this case therefore, the non-performance of his intention, though it may sometimes argue a *culpable fickleness* of temper, yet it does by no means infer the guilt of violating truth. And as a *real promise* puts a person's future conduct out of his own power, it is a mark of weakness for any one thus to bind himself if he can avoid it; and indeed it is the rule of every person of tolerable prudence never to *promise positively*, excepting in pecuniary matters

and other cases of necessity; but only to express a *present intention*, dependant upon present and foreseen circumstances, and liable to be changed as they change. This is keeping himself free, and preserving his right over his future actions. In cases, however, where more is intended, and more expressed, more is expected, and more is required by veracity. When a person tells you that he *will* do a certain thing, and that you may depend upon this, he cannot afterwards omit it, unless he is disabled from doing it, without incurring the imputation of falsehood, as really as if he declared what he knew to be false with respect to something *past* or *present*. That the designed breach of a real promise is a violation of truth, will appear from this consideration. The obligation which it lays us under continues from the time in which it was made, to the time in which it was to be performed. If in *any intermediate period*, the person who made it alters his intention, as he is at that instant under the obligation of his promise, he,

at that instant, falsifies his word, though he was before innocent. He is at that time justly considered as guilty of a wilful and known falsehood. Truth, therefore, absolutely requires that when we make promises we perform them; that when we enter into engagements with others we fulfil them; that when we speak, we speak what we think, and that at all times, our words and actions are the index of our minds. Nor let any one suppose that evasions, ambiguities of expression, or mental reservations will, in the least, palliate the guilt of deceit. These, I cannot help observing, are worse than open falsehoods. They are more repugnant to purity, simplicity and dignity of mind. They are, in fact, an attempt to deceive — Whom? Almighty God and our own consciences. But, whatever may be the case with our own consciences, Almighty God is not thus to be imposed upon. He sees at once the intention to deceive; and what is worse, he sees the design to conceal that

intention, and will, no doubt, severely punish the *double falsehood.*

Having enlarged thus far on the nature *of lying in general*, I shall now briefly take notice of *some of the species* of it, and endeavour to investigate the sources from which they spring. Though *every kind* of wilful falsehood is expressly forbidden, both by Reason and Scripture, and attended with a *high* degree of guilt itself, as well as introductory to greater offences, yet every kind of it is not *equally* shameful and atrocious. The *pernicious* lie, or that which is told with a view to injure another, is no doubt the *most criminal.* The heinousness of this, which likewise includes in it the crime of *injustice* at least, is too obvious to need to be enlarged upon. Indeed there is no person existing, however loose his moral principles may be, who will attempt openly to justify it. But it is possible, that we may meet with a person who will say, "though I ought not to serve *myself* by the me-

thods of falsehood and deceit, yet I may surely innocently employ them for the benefit of *others*." Of all the practical errors which ever suggested themselves to the mind of man, this is the most unfounded and the most dangerous. The notion that it was lawful to lie for the sake of spreading the truth (a strange paradox) has done more harm to Christianity, than all the open attacks of its professed adversaries. Hence have arisen false legions, spurious gospels, reports of miracles, which never existed, and in a word, innumerable fictions and endless forgeries. Hence has arisen, in our time, an attempt to gloss over, to excuse, and even to justify a crime, the turpitude of which exceeds the power of language to express, and is not *seen* and not *felt*, only because it is not *reflected upon; I mean the subscription to articles of Religion which a person does not believe.* I am not speaking now against any religious articles; those who believe or think they believe those to which I allude, will unite with me in the assertion — every man who has

a well-informed conscience, will join with me in the assertion — that of all species of lying this is the worst. Our rule, our *law* is given us; it is *express* and *positive*. It is that law on which the order and harmony of the moral world depend. Whenever the violation of it *appears* to be attended with advantage, it is because we can see but a little way into the consequences of our actions. Lying lips are but for a moment, but Truth is eternal and omnipotent. The happiness of the Universe is the end of the *Divine* Government. Virtue is made the duty of reasonable beings, because the happiness of the Universe depends upon it. From what we see we may fairly infer that this connexion is indissoluble. Upon this principle, that is, with a regard to this connexion, we may act so long as we *adhere* to our rule. But as our minds cannot grasp the object, nor see many links of a chain which extends to infinity, upon this principle we must *not* act, that is with a view to *general* happiness, in *opposition* to our rule. We have therefore nothing

to do, but to adhere inflexibly to our duty, and to leave the rest to God. If it were a general opinion, that we might break the Divine law, when it appeared to us that the interest of our fellow creatures would be promoted by it, all virtue, morality, and Religion, would at once be at an end. Some plausible pretext would then be found for the commission of every species of iniquity. But as in all other cases, the Scriptures lay down our duty *without any exception*, so in the present case they do not command us to speak truth when it *will be of service*, but they suppose that it will *always* be of service, and therefore *always* enjoin it.

Let us now consider another species of Lies, those which are told for the sake of *entertainment* and *amusement*. To these it may be presumed by some, that no high degree of criminality can justly be attached. I would not be thought uncharitable or severe, but I cannot help observing, that Truth is too sacred to be

wantonly sported with. Where there is no intention to deceive, and where a falsehood is told *as such*, or we are afterwards informed that it was *only a fiction*, the harm cannot be very considerable. But if we recur to our definition, we shall find that this does not come under the denomination of *a lie*. If a person, for the sake of entertaining a company, will not scruple to assert as true, what he believes to be false, with an intention to deceive, he is no doubt a *liar*, and as such, deeply involved in guilt. Are we inclined to consider his faults as of a slight and trivial nature? Let us only ask ourselves what we should think of a person who would *curse* and *swear*, or suffer himself to be *intoxicated* for the sake of amusing others. In *these* cases we should not be inclined to make any allowance for the crime, and why should we in the case of a violation of truth? Besides, as another motive to guard against these *jocose* lies, (which are in themselves fatal to the reputation of the person who practises

them,) I observe, that by a natural and easy gradation, they lead to *pernicious* lies. When a regard for truth is once lost, there is no knowing where a man will stop. He who will utter a falsehood merely for the sake of a joke, we may rest assured will, through habit, inattention, or carelessness, do it upon other occasions, and we may, I think, safely conclude, that he will not scruple it when his own private interest is concerned.

Another fruitful source of falsehood which it is necessary to take notice of, is a desire of appearing *great and important.* This frequently leads persons to profess themselves something when in fact they are nothing. Often does it lead men to boast of friendships which never existed, to talk of books which they never read, and to glory in exploits which they never performed. It moreover lays a foundation in the breast of the man who practises it, for the tormenting passions of jealousy and envy, and leads to that

most detestable of all species of lying, groundless slander and defamation. I am sorry to suppose it possible, (but candour itself will not prevent the supposition,) that this love of applause, where a regard for veracity is lost, will sometimes proceed to such a length as to lead a person to boast of vices which he never committed. There is scarcely any crime which argues so total a depravity of mind as this. The persons who practise it, will no doubt be compelled to answer for the vices which their boasting shows they wish to have committed; for the lie they have told to bring this guilt upon themselves, and for the pernicious influence which their example and conversation may have upon society.

Another common cause of unfounded assertions deserves to be taken notice of, though it may not always lead to a lie in the sense I have defined it, which is a *thoughtless* and *talkative* temper. Persons who say a great deal and think but little,

especially if the characters and concerns of others be the principal subjects of their harangues, as they necessarily will be, must sometimes say things for which they have not sufficient authority. It is possible they may mean no harm: and as they do not intend to injure the character of their neighbour, nor to deceive those they converse with, they may conclude that they are free from guilt. That they are, in these circumstances, free from the guilt of a *lie*, I am willing to acknowledge; but at the same time it must be confessed, that they are not free from the guilt of "foolish talking and jesting," nor perhaps of unjustly traducing the character of their neighbour. If this be the case, it is probable that their levity and thoughtlessness will be entirely overlooked by the world, and they will sustain the character of a liar, as well as suffer the temporal inconveniences with which it is attended. To such persons therefore, if they know themselves sufficiently to make the proper application, I would

most earnestly recommend it, to *talk less*, and to *think more*.

As the conclusion of this Lecture, I shall only observe, that the cause of veracity is better supported by *prevention* than by *remedy*; by guarding against the *first violation* of it, than by a scheme of recovering the habit. Let us then guard against all the *temptations* to falsehood, and cultivate every temper and disposition which may lead us to an open, honest, and ingenuous behaviour. To this end, let us be sincere, humble, modest, and contented. Let us not wish to be thought richer, greater, wiser, or better than we are; and that we may have a just claim to the good opinion and esteem of those with whom we are connected, without despising any advantage which is not inconsistent with our duty, let us endeavour to be *wise and good in reality*. Let us always *be* what we would wish to *appear*. Let us above all things be careful that our whole life be not a succession

of falsehoods, by acting inconsistently with our principles. Let our *actions*, as well as our *words*, be all *true* — the natural undisguised expressions of the opinions and belief of our understandings, and of the sentiments and feelings of our hearts.

LECTURE XXVIII.

It was the business of a former lecture to explain the *nature of a Lie* in general, and to point out the most *common species* of falsehood which prevail in the world. With respect to the nature of a lie in general, I observed that it consists in *declaring a thing to be true which we believe to be false, with an intention to deceive.* With respect to the several *kinds* of falsehood which prevail in the world, I observed that they may be classed under the heads of *injurious, officious, jocose, vain,* and *thoughtless,* according to the different principles from which they spring. The bad consequences of each of these species of falsehood, and the obligations we are under to *adhere to Truth in all cases* were briefly touched upon, but not in so copious a manner as to

supersede the utility of another lecture more expressly on this part of the subject. I beg leave, therefore, to resume it, trusting that its unrivalled importance will be considered as a sufficient apology if I should be led to some repetitions.

I begin with observing that Truth is the *first* of *social virtues*, and the *foundation* of all the rest.

Mankind never were intended by their beneficent Creator to tread the path of life unconnected and alone. Their nature is a *social* nature. Their mutual wants can only be supplied, their mutual happiness only promoted, by their mutual assistance. They are not more distinguished from the animals below them by their reason and understanding, than by the power they enjoy of communicating to one another all the ideas and emotions of their minds. It is this power which is the bond of their union. It is this which more than any thing else denominates them social beings. By the

arts of speaking and writing, all kinds of knowledge are diffused far and wide, happiness and joy are reflected from breast to breast; and we are able to converse with, to instruct, and improve, not only distant nations, but ages yet unborn. Such is the privilege, such the boasted privilege of man. And well may he value himself on a faculty so noble, so excellent, so beneficial. But in order to experience the advantages which the faculty of speech was intended to procure, it is necessary that it be applied to its intended purpose. Take away that confidence which mankind naturally have in each others veracity, — that general presumption that our words are the images of our thoughts, and our boasted privilege of speech is no longer useful. If this faculty be employed, not to *communicate* but to *conceal* our sentiments; instead of being the *bond* and *support* of society, it becomes the instrument of *confusion* and *mischief*. Supposing the practice of lying universal, (and let it be remembered,

that he who is guilty of it uses his endeavours to make it so,) a way would be open to perpetual suspicions and endless distrusts, the bonds of society would be broken asunder, and he only would have cause to bless his fate, who had retired from the company of rational brutes to converse with the more artless and honest tenants of the woods. These assertions, strong as they are, are not the effusions of a heated imagination, but they are founded in the reason and nature of things. As certainly as society exists by the free communication of our sentiments, and speech and writing are the instruments for this purpose, so certain it is that if they are made the instruments of dissimulation and deceit, the foundations of society must give way, and the state of mankind degenerate by degrees into a state of open violence and lawless confusion. Such are the effects of lying on *society*; let us next proceed to consider the consequences of it with respect to the person who is guilty of it.

And the first observation which strikes us on this head is, that a Liar has undertaken a *difficult* part to act, and is involved in *toils* and *hardships*, from which the man who is guided by the plain rules of honesty is exempt. At our entrance into the world, we are open and sincere, our expressions are then artless and undesigning — the true images of our thoughts. Disguises and Prevarication are gradually learned from our commerce with the world, though sometimes, alas! in so early a period of life, that they are mistaken by many for original principles. Certain however it is, that Truth is a dictate of Nature, and consequently it is more easy to observe it, than to tread in the perplexed mazes of duplicity and falsehood. Ask an honest man a question, and he has no trouble, but to give you an answer. If he is obliged to call recollection to his aid, it is only to bring to his mind the *simple* fact. On the contrary a Liar is obliged to hesitate before he gives you an answer. He must call to

mind what he before said on the subject, and must exercise great caution, lest by some inconsistency in his accounts, he should discover his falsehoods. Hence there are more abilities requisite, and more pains to be taken to qualify a man for a hypocrite, than for almost any other character. It is an expression common to a proverb, "that a Liar ought to have a good memory." Indeed, if he have not a memory stronger than is commonly found, and abilities superior to those which the generality of mankind possess, certain it is, that his reputation for sincerity will soon be lost, and he will be unable to accomplish his ends either by Truth or Falsehood.

"I have often thought," says the excellent Archbishop Tillotson, "that God has in great wisdom hid from men of false and dishonest minds, the wonderful advantages of Truth and Integrity to the prosperity even of our worldly affairs. These men are so blinded by their covetousness and ambition, that they cannot

look beyond a present advantage, nor forbear to seize upon it, though by ways ever so indirect. They cannot see so far as to the remote consequences of a steady integrity, and the vast benefits and advantages which it will bring a man at last. Were but this sort of men wise and clear-sighted enough to discern this, they would be honest out of mere knavery, not out of any love to honesty and virtue, but with a crafty design to promote more effectually their own interest; and therefore the justice of the Divine Providence hath hid this truest point of wisdom from their eyes, that bad men might not be upon equal terms with the just and upright, and serve their own wicked designs by honest and lawful means."

The advantages of Truth are *permanent*, but the advantages of Falsehood, whatever they may be, are of *short duration*. "The lip of Truth," says Solomon, "is established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment." I think I may venture to assert, that it is not possible

for an habitual Liar always to remain unsuspected. The mask *will*, it *must*, some time fall off, and he will be exposed to the world in his proper colours. And when this is the case, adieu to all confidence, adieu to all esteem and respect; adieu to every thing but disgrace and infamy, hatred and contempt. There is no character which is holden in more general detestation than that of a *common Liar*. So sensible are all mankind of the odium which necessarily attends it, that even those who will *practise* this vice at the hazard of their *souls*, will *resent the imputation* of it at the hazard of their *lives*. No one, whatever he may be in *reality*, can bear to be *thought* void of veracity. No one, whatever he may overlook in *himself*, can avoid perceiving the malignity of falsehood in *others*. Indeed, such is its malignity, that, to make a man suspected when he speaks truth, distrusted when he means honestly, despised when he wishes to be esteemed, and hated when he aims to be beloved, nothing more is necessary

than that he should sustain the character of a *common Liar.*

Nor are these the only evil consequences which flow from the practice of dissimulation and habitual falsehood. The person who is capable of it, must be a stranger to the Godlike pleasure of self-approbation, and experience that most painful of all species of contempt, the contempt of *his own heart.* That inward satisfaction which arises from a consciousness of *virtuous intentions*, will support a man under the severest censures, which malice or envy can invent. But when a person is reduced to so wretched a state as to despise *himself*, the *united applauses of the whole world*, striking in *discord*, with a voice which cannot be stifled, will only serve to aggravate his distress, and increase the burden of his misery. Any *external* evil, by a mind of common firmness, *may* be borne; but that *internal* evil, the evil of *self-contempt*, who can bear?

But dreadful as this is, it is not the whole which a Liar has to sustain. Is the contempt of his *own heart* and of his *fellow creatures* the *only* contempt to which he is exposed? By no means; he is justly exposed to the additional contempt of *Almighty God.* That Being whose character is Truth must *love* truth in his creatures; and as he will reward the practice of it with his approbation, so he will punish the violation of it with his severest displeasure. This we might conclude from those notions which we have of his character from the *light of nature.* But he has left us to infer it, not only by argumentative deductions from *his attributes* and *our* faculties, but in a shorter and plainer method he has in his revealed will, expressly published his displeasure against every species of falsehood. "These six things," says Solomon, "does the Lord hate, yea seven are an abomination to him, a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked ima-

ginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren." But the declarations of the Gospel are still more express and more severe, not only in the general threatnings against all sin, in which this is of course included, but in specifying this iniquity in particular, as liable to the severest condemnation. St. Paul ranks offenders of this kind in the worst of company. "The law," says he, "was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for *Liars*, for perjured persons; and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." St. John's account of the *consequences* of this vice is very terrible. "The unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all Liars shall have their por-

tion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." The New Testament abounds with declarations of this kind.

If then, to sum up the whole, we are unwilling to contribute our part towards dissolving the bonds of Society; if we wish to avoid endless perplexities and difficulties, and to have our passage through life smooth and easy; if we dread the contempt of our own hearts, of our fellow-creatures, and of Almighty God, and that future punishment which he has denounced in his word against the worst of crimes, let us avoid every species of falsehood; and upon all occasions, whatever consequences we may think we foresee, adhere inflexibly to Truth. This is the plainest, the easiest, the happiest of all directions. This is the certain way to live beloved, to die lamented; and when we are removed from this scene of action to have our memory blessed.

The advice which was given in a former Lecture, to cultivate all amiable and virtuous dispositions, is the best method which can possibly be taken to secure our veracity. If our *thoughts*, our *designs* and *actions* are *true*, our *words* need not be false. When this is the case we shall have no *end* to answer by deceit, and consequently shall be free from all temptation to practise it. Let us therefore be less solicitous to *appear* good than to *be so* in *reality*. Let us strive to cultivate, and to fix deeply in our minds, all those moral qualities which too many, alas! are only desirous of being *thought* to possess. Let Truth be the character of our minds, and let us fear the violation of it much more than death.

As it is easier to *prevent* bad habits of every kind from taking place at first than *afterwards to correct* them, (though the latter is not only possible but absolutely necessary) it cannot be amiss to caution those who are *Parents*, and, indeed *all*,

when *they shall become* Parents, to instil into the minds of their offspring, at that season when they are most susceptible of impressions, a strong and lively sense of the vast importance and indispensable obligation of Truth. Let this be the first principle of all young minds. Whatever other faults you may overlook, never, never overlook a single breach of veracity. At *all events*, make them speak the language of truth. For alarming as it may sound, I will venture to affirm that a Child who has formed an incurable habit of lying, is lost to innocence, lost to virtue, lost to respect among men, lost to God, and lost to Heaven. And little do they attend to the nature of habits of every kind, who suppose that if a habit of violating truth be formed at that early period when the language is naturally most artless, and the soul most sincere, it will be easily broken after mixing in a world where falsehood and dissimulation too generally abound. I appeal to the experience of those who have lived long

enough in the world to derive knowledge from experience, whether those children which they have known to be guilty of this vice, and have not been cured of it, have not practised it in a more shameful degree when they have reached the period of *manhood.* I speak from no little experience of my own. It is as reasonable to expect that a *thorn* will grow into a *vine,* or a *thistle* into a *fig-tree,* as that an *artful and dishonest Child* should become a *sincere and honest Man.* That this observation, and an exhortation to check the growing evil while there is a possibility of doing it, may make a lasting impression upon your minds, I shall leave them, as the conclusion of what I have to offer upon this *truly important,* but too much neglected subject.

LECTURE XXIX.

HAVING considered the *Nature of Man*, and some of the most important *relations* which he sustains to beings of the *same* species, which considerations have led us to an inquiry into the duties which he owes to *himself* and his *fellow-creatures*, we are now arrived at the third part of our course, in which it is proposed to treat of the duties which he owes to *God*. This part of morality, on account of the *excellence* of its object, and our entire dependence upon God for existence and happiness, is the *most important* of all; it is the highest exercise of all the higher powers of our nature, and what particularly distinguishes man from the animals below him. This sublime principle,

which is termed *Piety*, consists in a firm belief, and in just conceptions of the Being, Perfections, and Providence of God, and in such an habitual consideration of these as will produce and keep in constant exercise *suitable affections* of mind towards God, and form us to a resemblance of his moral perfections, and a constant obedience to his will. It is, therefore, in *itself*, the *highest* point of excellence to which the best use of our intellectual and moral faculties can attain, and it is moreover the spring of every *personal* and *social* virtue.

That "*there is a God*, all Nature cries aloud through all her works." Whatever part of the great creation we survey; whether we contemplate the celestial bodies, or confine our views to this earth on which we dwell; whether we consider the inanimate, vegetable, or animal world; whether we consider the curious structure of the human body, or the more exalted faculties of the human mind; in any of these cases we cannot

but acknowledge the existence of a *powerful, wise*, and *benevolent Agent*, by whose energy all things were at first created, and to whose care they are still indebted for their continuance and support. No being whatever is capable of producing itself. To suppose that it is, would be to suppose it capable of acting before it existed. Every *effect*, that is, every thing which *begins* to be, necessarily implies a *cause* adequate to its production. To suppose the contrary would be an insult upon the understanding of every man, and a contradiction to all the first principles of our nature. Nor can either *blind Chance* or *undesigning Necessity* (one of which all atheists have substituted in the room of a Deity) be the cause of that curious frame of things which we behold around us. Allowing both of these words to mean something which is capable of action, (although I do not see how we can affix to them any determinate ideas,) still it is absolutely impossible that either of them should produce such an

uniformity, and at the same time such a *variety* of effects as appear in the world. Uniformity amidst variety is the character of all the works of nature. Now supposing any events to be brought about by the operations of blind *chance*, it is impossible that such events should be *steady* and *uniform*. Supposing any effects to be produced by undesigning *necessity*, it is impossible that such effects should be *multiform* and *various*. That all things, therefore, were created by *chance* or *necessity*, is a supposition which the mind cannot admit for a moment. Accordingly we find that in almost every nation of the world, and in every age, it has been a standing article of belief that *there is a God*. Next to those truths which are intuitively discerned or discovered by means of the senses, this has been most generally admitted. And yet notwithstanding this agreement in the *general truth*, there is no subject on which mankind have formed more *discordant* opinions. It is one of the most

curious circumstances in the history of the human mind, that although right sentiments of God naturally lead to a right view of all the great doctrines of religion, to a right conduct in life, and to the highest happiness of which we are capable; and although both nature and revelation speak plainly on this subject; yet mankind *will not receive the truth*, that *there is one God, and that God a Being of all possible perfection.* The belief of a number of gods and goddesses who were concerned in the government of the world, was generally received (except by the Jews, who were set apart to preserve the faith of *one* God) previously to the Christian dispensation. And the heathens not only acknowledged a multitude of beings to whom they gave the appellation of deities, but they also ascribed to them all the passions, imperfections, and even vices of men. They supposed them guilty not only of those moral defects which may be called vices of *the mind*, but of the lowest sensuality,

and of every crime which can disgrace human nature. It is of very great importance that we believe in *one* God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, but it is of greater importance still that we believe him to be, what he really is, not only the greatest and wisest, but the BEST of all beings. It is true we cannot form *full* and *adequate* ideas of the perfections of the Divine Nature, nor can we conceive of the ESSENCE of the Deity. But we can form *clear* ideas as far as they go, even on this sublime and awful subject, and we can form no idea of the *essence* either of our own souls or bodies, or of any of the objects around us. It is the *character*, and not the *essence* of God with which we are concerned, and of this we are capable of forming such ideas as will be sufficient to answer all the purposes of religion. It has been the error of Christians to ascribe to the Divine Being such qualities as cannot be reconciled with *Goodness*. Though every Christian would in words acknowledge

that the Being he worships is perfectly good, yet in explaining their conceptions of the measures of his government, or in giving an account of his dispensations to mankind, many would represent him as acting in a manner totally inconsistent with this attribute. In religion, therefore, the principal business is to recur to our first principles, and to reason from them accurately and consistently. The principles are few and easy to be understood, and the conclusions from them are such as are level to a common understanding. The misfortune is, that men will not properly use their understanding on this most important of all subjects.

Next to the neglect or abuse of Reason, one of the principal causes of false notions of the Divine Being, is a *vicious temper*, or a *corrupt heart*. Our ideas of every thing around us, and of *that Being* who originally formed us, naturally take a tincture from the temper of our own minds. We too often see things through

the medium of our passions. Thus the man of a *morose* and *sullen* temper, is apt to consider the Deity himself as *gloomy* and *severe*. The man of an *arbitrary overbearing* disposition, is apt to consider the Deity himself as acting from principles *similar to his own*. The man of a *cruel unrelenting* turn of mind is apt to consider the Deity himself as possessed of the same *vindictive* disposition. The man who thinks that the essence of religion consists in *external* things, is apt to think that the Deity will accept a strict performance of *them*, in the room of real goodness of heart and life. On the other hand, the man whose mind is amiable, and whose dispositions are virtuous—who loves goodness, and practises it with delight, will easily be taught to believe, that the Being he worships is possessed of every *amiable* as well as every *venerable* perfection. I am aware here of an apparent difficulty, which requires some explanation. It may be said that the Scriptures sometimes represent God as

possessed of some of those passions which are considered as disgraceful to man. It may be said that he is sometimes represented as being *angry* with sinners, and determined to execute *vengeance* upon them. To obviate this difficulty, I would observe, that the sacred writers, in compliance with human weakness, when speaking of *divine* things, accommodate themselves to the language of *men*. Thus, when it is said that God is *angry* or will exercise *vengeance* upon sinners, we must understand that he is disposed to act towards them in such a manner as a man would do if *under the influence of the passion of anger or revenge*, that is, he will *punish* them. In this sense every text of this nature is to be understood.

Though we are commanded in Scripture to *serve* and to *glorify* God, yet it is absurd to suppose that any thing which we can do, can be of any *real service* to him, or that he delights in *that glory* which is so much the object of human ambition. It

is true we ought frequently to employ ourselves in acts of adoration. But let us be careful not to entertain wrong ideas of this service. Let us not suppose that God takes any pleasure in hearing an enumeration of the excellencies of his nature. It is not *He* who receives any advantage from this part of our religious service, but *ourselves*. The end of adoration is to inspire us with becoming notions of the Supreme Being, to kindle in our breasts the flame of devotion, and to fix in our minds such a sense of the perfections of God, as may lead us to venerate and love Him, to be thankful that we are under his protection, and to acquiesce with cheerfulness in all the dispensations of his Providence. By *serving* God is meant an obedience to his laws, not with a view to promote *his* felicity, but *our own*. By *glorifying* him is meant spreading the knowledge of his perfections, not with a view to increase *his* happiness, but with a view to *our own advantage*; with a view to lead *us to act*

agreeably to the design of God in our creation.

Though we are in the Scriptures said to be created in the *image* of God, and though it is our duty to endeavour to *resemble* him, yet it by no means follows hence that He is in every respect *such an one as ourselves.* We are to imitate his *Goodness,* and his *moral* perfections which proceed from his Goodness, and we are to imitate them as far as we *are able,* which is to be "perfect" in our measure and degree "even as our Heavenly Father is" absolutely "perfect." After all, *our* goodness bears not so great a proportion to *His,* as the feeble glimmering of a waxen taper to the glorious lustre of the noon-day Sun. *His* goodness is infinite, and mixed with no kind or degree of imperfection. Ours at best is confined within a very narrow compass, and overbalanced by numberless imperfections. Though we are capable in a very faint degree of resembling and imitating Him,

that is, we are capable in some degree of *being good* and of *doing good*, yet after all it must be confessed, that as He is infinitely wiser than the wisest, so He is infinitely better than the best of Mankind.

The perfections of God in Religion are like Axioms, or first principles in Mathematics. Every thing is built upon them. As clear streams flow from a clear fountain, and polluted streams from a polluted fountain, so a true system of belief will naturally follow from entertaining true notions of the governor of the Universe, and false opinions from entertaining false notions of his Being and Perfections. It is a circumstance for which we cannot be too thankful, that on this subject reason and revelation speak the same language. If their voice had been attended to, the world would have been a very different scene from what it is at present. Whenever their voice *shall* be attended to, and men will *dare* to

think for themselves, and in consequence of this, obtain *clear* and *accurate ideas of the Divine Character and Government*, the reign of darkness—of superstition and enthusiasm will be drawing to its close. We may hope that the reign of infidelity, profaneness, and religious indifference will terminate with it; and that the *knowledge* of God will be followed by an *imitation* of his *character*, and that the effect of this will be the regeneration of the world, "Peace on earth, and good will among men."

LECTURE XXX.

HAVING in my last Lecture insisted on the importance of the Religious Principle, and of forming right sentiments of the Divine Character and Government, and having given some general directions on this subject, I shall now proceed to the consideration of some of the particular perfections which both reason and Scripture teach us to ascribe to God, and the duties which we owe to Him, in consequence of his possessing these perfections. And in the first place I shall lay before you some observations on the *unity* of God.

It is sufficient to determine us in the belief of *one* God, the Creator and Governor of all things, that the arguments

which are brought against Atheism prove the existence of *one* such Being, and of *one only*. As therefore the existence of *one* God may be demonstrated; as the existence of *more* than one *cannot*, and is not required to account for the various appearances in Nature, it is, to say the least of it, an hypothesis without any foundation. The very same cause which would lead us to suppose *two* Gods, would lead us to suppose two millions; and if we rest not in the belief of *one*, it will be impossible to point out the number at which we should stop. Besides the idea of two or more omnipresent, omnipotent, and in all respects *absolutely perfect Beings*, seems to imply a contradiction. In confirmation of these conclusions, drawn from the nature of things, by the best use of the faculties which God has given us, let us attend to some of those marks of *unity of design* which appear in the frame and government of the world, and see if they do not likewise lead the mind to the acknow-

ledgment of *one* wise, powerful, and benevolent Cause.

Had the *different parts* of the Universe been the work of *different Beings*, it is natural to suppose that each part would have been unconnected and independent. But the slightest attention to the works of Creation, will convince us that the contrary is the case. Even very distant parts of Nature, are bound together by some connecting chain, and combine in the production of the same effects. The heat of the Sun, the showers of rain, and the soil of the earth, are all concerned in the production of every single plant. And as various *causes* often unite to produce one effect, so a *variety* of *effects* is often brought about by one and the same *original cause*. The principle of *Gravitation*, for instance, how great, surprising and various are its effects! the stability of the earth, the flux of rivers, the ebbing and flowing of the sea, the ascent of vapours, the descent of rain, together with many other effects, equally important and ne-

cessary, all depend upon this single principle. To *it* is owing likewise that the Air, that *necessary fluid to* the existence, and all the purposes of animal and vegetable life, continues to surround the earth, and that the heavenly bodies hold their stations, and continue to perform their appointed revolutions. Now when we, as in this case, see so *many effects* produced by *one cause*, and as in others, so many *causes* unite to produce *one effect*, can we avoid ascribing such a constitution of things to *one directing and overruling counsel?* Had the Universe been the work of a *variety* of independent beings, is it probable that one part would have been thus dependent upon another, and that such a connection would have subsisted between bodies which are placed at such an immense distance from one another? On the contrary, is it not natural to suppose, that if this had been the case, different parts of nature would have been totally independent, and would have

been formed, each with a different view, and to answer different ends and purposes?

Moreover, that order, harmony, and regular subordination which take place through the whole scale of created beings, are a strong proof of Unity of Intelligence in the Author of Nature. What but perfect Wisdom, inherent in one Being, could dispose the various ranks of creatures on the earth, in a manner the most convenient for each individual, and the whole system? What, but *one governing Wisdom* could appoint them their several stations, and provide for the gratification of their several wants, without any confusion or disorder, and constitute things in such a manner, that they should not *encroach* upon, but on the contrary be mutually useful to one another, agreeably to a settled and regular subordination? What could occasion that *similarity* which there is both in the

bodily and mental structure of *individuals* of the human race; what that sameness of passion, affection, principle, and sentiment, but the Will of *one* and the same wise and powerful Being? Are not all mankind connected together as links in the same chain? Does not the connection proceed from relations to friends; from friends to acquaintance, from acquaintance to our Country; from our Country, to the whole human race? Now if we are thus formed with *design*, and if this constitution is the result of *Intelligence*, is it natural to suppose that it is the work of a *variety* of *intelligent designing causes*, each of which pursued his own plan without any regard to the rest? Is it not much more natural to ascribe it to *one* perfect and independent Being, who, as the Apostle says, "has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth; who *alone* is God; who is the Father of all, above all, through all, and in all." This is the lan-

guage of Reason, this the voice which Nature utters.

And as the *light of Reason* plainly discovers to us the being of *one* God, the Maker and Governor of all things, so the *sacred Scriptures*, in the most express terms, and in a variety of places, assert the truth, and strongly enforce the belief of this great principle of Religion. It is their language, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." "The Lord, He is God, in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath, there is none else." "Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee." Our Saviour Himself, said unto the man who accosted Him by the appellation of Good Master, "Why callest thou *me* good? None is good, save one, that is God." And in an address to his Heavenly Father, He says, "this is life eternal, that men might know Thee, the only true God

and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, says, "though there be many that are called Gods in heaven and on earth, yet to us there is but *one God, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." And in his epistle to Timothy, he says, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." So plainly and expressly have the Scriptures revealed this great truth, that there is one God, and one God only.

It is a necessary inference from *the Unity of* God, that He is the *only* proper object of *religious worship*, or of our prayers, thanksgivings, and unreserved confidence and obedience. To pay those regards to any other being or beings, which are due to God alone is termed *Idolatry*. It appears from numberless passages in the Scriptures, and, indeed, from the whole of the Jewish history, that Idolatry is peculiarly

offensive to the Supreme Being. The first commandment which He gave to the Jews is, "Thou shalt have no other Gods but Me." And the great object of the Hebrew government appears to have been the preservation of the belief of *one God*, while all the other nations of the earth were sunk in the grossest idolatry, and most deplorable superstition. Among the Jews, therefore, Idolatry was a crime of peculiar malignity. It was not only an offence in a *religious* view, but it was an act of *State Treason*; it was treason against that Being who condescended to stand in the relation to *them* of *King* and *Sovereign*. Upon this account the commission of it among the Israelites was punished with *Death*. And though the punishment of idolatry in those nations which enjoyed not such advantages for acquiring the knowledge of the truth as the Jews did, was *less severe*, yet as "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are

made;" and as men could not fail of discovering his Being and Providence, if they would but carefully attend to the effects of his operations continually before their eyes, God is represented as highly offended with those Gentiles who neglected to pay Him that worship which is justly his due. In consequence of their idolatry "God gave them up," says the Apostle, "to vile affections and to a reprobate mind, because when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things, because they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

We cannot be too much on our guard against falling into this sin. That we may be preserved from it, let us remember that there is one God, and one God

only. Let us remember that He is that great, venerable, and glorious Being who created all things by the word of his power, who is the Father of angels and of men; who is the greatest, the wisest, and the best of all Beings, whom cherubim, seraphim, and all the celestial hosts adore and venerate, and who has a just claim to our noblest and most exalted praises. And let us guard against introducing a confusion into our conceptions, and an inconsistency in our religious services, by metaphysical and unscriptural distinctions. If we talk about *three persons* in the Godhead, we must either mean *three distinct Beings*, or *three modes* or *attributes of the same Being*. Between these there is no conceivable medium. The former, (the belief of three distinct Beings,) is inconsistent with the Unity of God; the latter, (the belief of three modes or attributes of the same Being,) with the use of a *term* which has done more injury to Christianity than all the writings of infidels. Let us always

remember that "there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." That more Gods than one and more Mediators than one should have been introduced into the worship of Christians, cannot be too much lamented. It has destroyed the simplicity of our holy religion, led men to substitute something else in the room of a holy life, and been the cause of much bigotry, oppression, and persecution. O that that happy time may speedily arrive when the knowledge of one God will universally prevail! — when the whole world will be brought to believe in Him and in Jesus Christ whom He hath sent! O that the Sun of righteousness may shortly arise with healing in his rays, dispel every cloud of ignorance, bigotry, and superstition, and diffuse virtue and peace, truth and happiness far as the influence of the solar rays extends!

LECTURE XXXI.

As the question respecting the Unity of God, properly considered, is a question relating to number only, there seems to be no reason why it should be involved in any obscurity. The *spirituality* of God, which is the subject to which I purpose at this time to direct your thoughts, is certainly much more difficult in its nature and in its mode of investigation. I shall, however, with humility, endeavour to lay before you the information with which we are favoured by Reason and Revelation, on this venerable attribute of the Supreme Being.

If the difficulty of forming adequate conceptions of *self-existence*, *eternity* and *infinity*, which the finite nature of the

human mind renders insurmountable, were allowed to be any just foundation for entertaining doubts respecting the existence of a Deity, (and on this difficulty Atheism rests,) on the same principles, our ignorance of the *age* and *personal qualities* of the author of any literary work or curious piece of mechanism, would be a just foundation for doubting whether such an author ever actually existed, and whether the work was made at all. In like manner, if our ignorance of the nature or essence of a spiritual being be brought as a reason for doubting of the existence of such a being, our ignorance of the *substance of matter*, and of the *principle of thought*, might be urged as an argument for doubting of *our own* existence. It is true, as the Scripture expresses it, "we cannot by searching find out God; we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection." We may, however, by attending to the operations of his hand, both within us and around us, discover with certainty

his existence, and so much of his character and perfections, as is sufficient to answer the purposes of Religion. We may discover that He is a being of Almighty Power, and therefore to be feared and reverenced; that He is a being of perfect wisdom, and therefore to be admired and adored; and that He is a being of infinite Goodness, and therefore to be praised and loved. We may likewise discover that He is a *Spirit*, and therefore to be worshipped, as we are commanded to worship Him, in *Spirit and in Truth.* It is true our ideas of Spirituality are chiefly *negative*: the *principal*, and perhaps the *only positive* ideas which we have of it are those of *activity* and *intelligence*, or a power of *acting* and *understanding*. But though our *positive* ideas of Spirit are so few, our *negative* ideas of it are more numerous. Some of these I shall briefly exhibit. And the first notion which suggests itself to our understanding of a Spirit, is that of a being removed from all those gross properties which

constitute the nature of *Matter* or *Body*. Matter is, with some exceptions, visible to the eye, Spirit invisible; matter is tangible, but a spirit cannot be touched; matter may be divided into parts, but a spirit is indivisible; matter is passive, but a spirit is active. The Divine Being, therefore, who is a pure and perfect Spirit, is far removed from every thing which is an essential property of Materiality. Hence it follows that we ought not to conceive of Him as having a *human* form, or as possessed of any particular *shape* or *figure*; and hence likewise it follows, that *no creature* can give us any idea of his *likeness*. Evén the most *subtle ether* or the *purest light* is no image of the Deity.

Man, in consequence of his formation of material particles, experiences many passions and affections which are accompanied with *bodily agitations*, and which are productive of *pain* as well as *pleasure*. In his present imperfect state, he has

not only the superior principles of activity and intelligence, but likewise some *lower* appetites and passions which are only given to excite him to pursue those means which are necessary for the preservation of his *body*, and for the comfort of his *animal* life. But the *Divine*, purely Spiritual Nature, is infinitely *above* these infirmities. It is true, the Scriptures, in condescension to human weakness, sometimes represent Him as having those organs of sensation, by which ideas are conveyed to the human mind. Thus God is said to *see*, to *hear*, and the like. But we must ever remember that these are figurative expressions, made use of to represent to our conceptions those powers of the Divine Being, by which He becomes acquainted with all our thoughts, with all our words, and with all our actions. As we perceive in the world around us *different orders of material and animal beings*, so it is reasonable to conclude from analogy, that there are in the universe different orders of *immaterial*

or *spiritual* natures. In the scale of intellectual existence, there are, no doubt, beings who possess faculties as much superior to those of the *human* mind, as those of the human mind are to the powers of the meanest insect. But even the *highest orders of created* intelligences; even cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, are in dignity of nature as well as character, infinitely beneath the *all perfect God.* He is, not only a Spirit, but underived, eternal, infinite, and unchangeable. There are no seeds or principles of decay within him, nor can He possibly suffer from any thing from without. These appear to be the best ideas which we are capable of forming of the Spirituality of God; and though they are by no means *full* and *adequate*, yet they are *clear as far as they go.* The imperfection of our knowledge on this awful subject does not arise from the *confusion* of our ideas, but because we have *so few* ideas. Let us briefly attend to some of the arguments which are com-

monly brought to prove that God is a Spirit.

The general opinion which has prevailed in the world respecting *Matter*, is that it is entirely *passive*, and that it can *act only as it is acted upon. Solid extension, divisibility*, and *figure*, have been considered as its *primary* and *essential* qualities. It is capable of being variously compounded and divided, and of various figures and situations; but it does not appear that it can compound or divide *itself*, or change its figure or situation. We must therefore call in the assistance of some *external spiritual Agent* to account for even the *most common and obvious appearances in nature.* And if this is the case, certainly the *original formation* of the sun, moon, and stars, and the various material worlds which are scattered through the vast extent of the universe, must be ascribed to an *active, intelligent, immaterial Cause.*

Some modern Philosophers, instead of considering *Solidity* and *Impenetrability* as the primary qualities of matter, have substituted in their room *Attraction* and *Repulsion.* As it is perfectly inconceivable, and has been almost universally allowed to be so, that *Thought* should arise from the former of these, that is from Solidity and Impenetrability, so I confess that it does not appear to me that there is any connexion between the latter — *Attraction* and *Repulsion*, and *Perception* and *Consciousness*, and the *Faculties of the human Mind.* But if we suppose it *possible* for Matter peculiarly organized to be capable of the various operations of the human mind, or in other words, that the Soul of man is material, still we must call in the agency of a superior Spiritual Being, to organize it so as to produce this wonderful effect. And thus, upon this supposition, it follows, that *Original Intelligence* — that Being who thus curiously modified a part of matter, and endued it

with a capacity of *thinking*, must *Himself be spiritual or immaterial.* It is plain therefore, to our weak understandings, from the nature of things, as well as the declaration of Scripture, that "*God is a Spirit.*" But if these speculations should be considered as too abstracted for general utility, and as remote from practice, let us, whenever we reflect on the Spirituality of God, consider it as consisting in what we *can* conceive;—what *we* possess in an *inferior* degree ourselves, and what *God* possesses in an *absolute* degree, the powers of *Activity* and *Intelligence.* The duty immediately resulting from the Spirituality of God, is that pointed out by our Saviour, that of worshipping him *in Spirit and in Truth*, that is with the *Understanding* and with the *Heart.* When all the *powers* of the *mind* are properly engaged, I need not say that the language of the lips and the posture of the body will likewise be proper. The duties which we owe to God, are so plain to the

understanding of every impartial, considerate person, and so clearly revealed in the Gospel, that it is surprising they should ever have been misconceived. Yet so fond are mankind, in matters of Religion, of departing from what is plain and rational, to what is obscure and marvellous, that numbers, perhaps the greater part of Heathens, Jews, and Christians, have mistaken the *true* and *spiritual* worship of God, and proceeded, by gradual advances, to the grossest and most absurd superstition. Let us be particularly on our guard against all abuses of this kind. Anxious for the *end*, let us make use of all the *real means* of Religion. But let us not *rest* in them; *mistake* their *nature*, or *substitute* them for the *end*. Let our worship of God, who is a Spirit, proceed from right notions of his nature and perfections; of the relations in which He stands to us, and the Duties which we owe to Him; and let the Sincerity of it appear in an obedience to his commands,

a conformity to his likeness, an esteem for his excellencies, gratitude for his mercies, and submission to the appointments of his Providence. In a word, let us "wash our hands in innocency, and thus let us compass the Altar of the Lord."

It is with pain that I proceed; but in a lecture on the true and spiritual worship of God, my conscience commands me to speak in stronger and plainer terms than moralists have generally done, on the *superlative Guilt* of worshipping Him, not in *outward form* only, but in *insincerity* and in *falsehood.* There is such a thing as insincerity to our *fellow creatures;* there is such a thing as insincerity *to our own hearts;* but of all species of insincerity, insincerity to *God* is surely the most criminal. "Thou hast not lied unto *Men,* but unto GOD," said the Apostle, when he was going to inflict a punishment, not only upon *one,* but a *second* victim, which was to stand as a monument of the displeasure of God against a

crime, which holds a place in this part of the scale of moral depravity. What is a forgery to a crime of this nature? The subject of *Rights* has lately been much attended to. It is an important subject. But it has been partially considered, and viewed on *one* and the *worst* side only. There *are rights* belonging to every being, and to every relation in which one being can be placed to another, either of the same or of a different species. But rights and duties are always connected. They are correlative and reciprocal. The *rights of one*, necessarily imply the *duties of another.* And the misfortune is, that instead of attending to *others' rights* and *our own duties*, which would have led to a virtuous conduct, and have been productive of general happiness; we have inverted the rule, and thought only of *our own rights* and *the duties of others*, which leads to selfishness, and an unchristian conduct. Let the rights of every individual, in every situation in life, be understood, acknowledged, and regarded as

sacred. Let the rights of the *meanest insect*, which are the gift of its Creator, and which imply life and enjoyment, when they do not interfere with the happiness of other beings, be scrupulously attended to. But are there no rights which belong to *God?* Are there *no Duties* incumbent upon us in consequence of these? Are the rights of *God* to be disregarded, and are the *duties* which they command to be neglected with impunity? If there be *a right* which belongs to *God*, it is the *sincere worship* of his creatures. If there be a *duty* incumbent upon *Man* as his creature and beneficiary, it is *to pay Him this worship.* To violate this right — to withhold this duty — I tremble when I think on its malignity. If there be any who act in this manner, it is impossible that they can see their conduct in its true light. I am not speaking of *persons*, but of *things.* I am not applying this censure in any degree to those who are *sincere*, however erroneous their opinions may be, however faulty their

practice. I am speaking of *insincerity to God*, of which, as God, the searcher of hearts, is perhaps the *only witness*, let God the searcher of hearts be *the only Judge*. Let us not judge our brethren, but let us take care, above all things, that the judgment do not fall upon ourselves. Whatever be our intellectual imperfections, whatever our moral defects, let us not be chargeable with insincerity to God in any the least instance. Let us ever remember that God is a *Spirit*, and that they that worship him, must worship Him in *Spirit* and in *Truth*.

LECTURE XXXII.

THE subject of the present Lecture being the *Eternity* of God, it becomes us to enter upon it with the utmost modesty and diffidence. We have nothing in our minds which bears the least analogy to *Eternity* or *Infinity*. We must, therefore, expect to meet with difficulties whenever our thoughts are employed on these awful characters of the Divine Mind. The difficulties present themselves to us in every step of our progress. Thus, for instance, an Eternity *now past* is what our feeble understandings cannot conceive. It appears to us that every point of duration which is *now past* was *once present*, and that if it were *once present*, it was *once future*. The same dif-

ficulty occurs in conceiving of an *eternity to come.* It appears to us that every point of duration which is *future* will be *present,* and that if it will be *present,* it will also be *past.* Thus are we involved in insurmountable difficulties whenever our thoughts are employed on so exalted a subject as Eternity. At the same time the idea of Eternity will force itself upon our minds, and we cannot but receive it, how vague and imperfect soever it may be. In this case we must suppose that the reasoning which is applied to a *part,* which is all that our minds can conceive, does not apply to the *whole,* which they cannot grasp. The difficulty, however, does not lie in conceiving of *God* as eternal, but in forming a notion of *Eternity in the abstract;* and if we can satisfactorily prove the *former,* any objection or difficulty which may be brought against the *latter* ought not in the least to affect our belief, as it is, in fact, no argument against the *Eternity of God,* much less against his existence and his

other perfections, but only an argument of the weakness and imperfection of our understandings, which cannot but aspire at an object too great for their capacity.

Now that God is, in the strictest sense, *from* everlasting, will evidently appear from the following considerations. Every being in the universe must either be *underived*, which is all that we mean by *self-existence*, or owe its existence to *some other being*. That neither we ourselves, nor the material system around us, are *self-existent*, is too obvious to need to be insisted upon. Every thing that we behold is both derived and dependent, and nothing more so than ourselves. But to imagine an *infinite* series of derived and dependent beings is evidently absurd, and instead of solving the difficulty in any one case, only increases it to infinity. *The first Cause* of all things, therefore, must himself be *underived*, and if this be the case, He must have existed from all eternity; for as his existence is without a *cause*, it must likewise be without a be-

ginning, the supposition of a *beginning* to exist, necessarily implying a *cause* of existence.

Again, as the idea of Eternity naturally *forces* itself upon the mind; as even Atheists acknowledge that something has existed from eternity, or nothing could exist now; and as the whole frame of nature is the production of an intelligent active Cause, it plainly follows, that this intelligent active Cause is *from everlasting*. Either this must be acknowledged, or we must confess, what I believe an Atheist would *not* confess, that *Intelligence* was indeed necessary to produce the *present system of things*, but that *mere chance* or *undesigning necessity*, as a pre-existent cause, produced Intelligence.

And if it thus plainly appear that God *has* existed *from* all Eternity, it is equally plain that he *will* exist *to* all Eternity. Whatever derives its existence from some other voluntary cause, must necessarily depend entirely on that cause

for its continuance in being; but He who is underived, independent, and self-sufficient, cannot be affected by any power whatever, but must remain, in the strictest sense, eternally the same. Immutability or Unchangeableness is, therefore, closely connected with, and necessarily follows from, an underived and eternal existence.

In confirmation of the doctrine of God's Eternity and Unchangeableness, which is so demonstrable upon principles of Reason, we have many express passages in Scripture. Thus, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." He is moroever called, "the Eternal God, the Holy One that inhabiteth Eternity," "the King eternal and immortal," "Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the end, who is, and who was, and who is to come." And the Psalmist, in these sublime expressions, addresses Him, "Thy years, O God! are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth,

and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

It is worthy of observation that the Scriptures, which are calculated for our improvement in holiness and virtue, and which are written with a view to instruct us in matters of *duty* more than in points of speculation, only teach us what it is of importance that we should know, and leave us in other matters to the exercise of our own reason and understanding. Thus, as it is of the highest importance that we should believe the *Eternity of God*, they plainly teach us that, "He is from everlasting to everlasting." But as it is not of such importance that we should know *how* this can be, as it is indeed a subject above our comprehension, they do not enter into any me-

taphysical enquiries, nor solve any metaphysical difficulties concerning the *Nature of Eternity.* And it would be better, if in subjects of this kind, we adhered more closely to the plainness and simplicity of Scripture. By attempting to define what is not to be defined; by attempting to grasp what is too large for our understandings, we do no honour to Religion, and only injure the cause which we wish to promote. How can we, who, comparatively speaking, are but of yesterday, and know nothing, form an adequate idea of the *manner* in which that exalted Being exists, who was from an eternity past, and who will be for an eternity to come? The impossibility of our having a *full and positive* idea of an *everlasting* duration will be apparent when we consider, that the only way by which we acquire the notion of duration at all, is by reflecting upon the succession of our own thoughts. This notion is enlarged, and time is measured and distinguished into certain periods by the successive

motions of the heavenly bodies. But imagination extends it beyond what we know to have actually passed, and beyond all the measures which we can possibly make use of, and still supposes it capable of addition. This is the method by which we obtain the idea of Eternity. Our notion of it therefore must after all be only negative and very imperfect; but at the same time we cannot but conceive that it is something real and positive, though infinitely above our comprehension. The scholastic writers, sensible of the difficulty of conceiving a *successive* Eternity, and supposing it inconsistent with the Perfection of an unchangeable Being to whom there is no past nor future, but to whom all things are ever present, have represented the Eternity of God as a *standing point* or *instant*, in which all parts of duration co-exist at once. And this opinion is adopted by Dr. Hartley. It is perhaps better for us to drop these scholastic notions, and to be content with the knowledge that God

is eternal, without wishing to know more particularly than it is in our power to know, *in what* his Eternity consists. We, who are frail, imperfect creatures, can recollect but little of what is *past*, since the short time that we were called into existence. We are ignorant of many events which are *now* taking place, and what is concealed in the womb of *futurity* is entirely hidden from our knowledge. The consideration of this may enable us to form a faint idea of the Eternity of God. In all these respects He possesses in an infinite degree those qualities in which we are deficient. He sees all things past, present, and to come, at one clear and certain view, not as if they all existed at once, but as being all within the compass of his knowledge. Many things happen to us which are unforeseen and unexpected. Our knowledge is perpetually increasing, our notions ever changing, our bodies continually altering their composition, and our minds successively under the influence of the various

modifications of the passions of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, desire and aversion. But with respect to the Deity, nothing is new; nothing surprising; nothing can happen without his knowledge, and even without his permission: His happiness cannot be affected by any thing external. No new emotion can arise in his mind; nor any uneasy fear disturb his tranquillity; no alteration whatever can take place in his councils, for all things were foreseen by Him, and all things conspire to fulfil his pleasure. These, though inadequate and imperfect, are perhaps the most proper sentiments which we can form of the Eternity of God; and such sentiments as these, if rendered habitual, cannot fail to answer the most valuable purposes, and to produce the most important effects upon our temper and conduct.

In pointing out the effects which the consideration of the Eternity of God ought to have upon our minds, I need

not enlarge upon the demands which it makes upon our highest reverence and veneration. Though it is but little that we know of Eternity, yet that little fills the mind with awe. How incomprehensibly great! how transcendently glorious must be that Being who is underived, eternal, and immutable! He has certainly a claim to our highest regards, our utmost reverence, and our supreme religious homage. Him, therefore, let us venerate and adore; and, whenever we approach the throne of His Majesty, let our minds be deeply affected by a sense of his Greatness and our own unworthiness; and let all our behaviour manifest the utmost reverence for the perfections of His character, and the greatest humility on account of the imperfections of our own. Again,

Eternity ought not to be considered so much as a *distinct* attribute of the Divine Nature as the *character of all* his perfections. His Power, his Wisdom, his Goodness, his Justice, and his Mercy

are unchangeable and everlasting. This is the most elevating consideration that can enter the human mind. The kind intentions of our fellow-creatures towards us a thousand accidents may prevent them from executing. The promises which they make of their assistance and friendship, it may not be in their power to perform: but *absolute certainty* belongs to God. Whatever He promises, He is *able* to perform, and whatever He promises sooner or later He *will* perform. Vain, therefore, are the objections of those who, contemplating the ravages of war, the corruptions of religion, and the many natural and moral evils which abound in the world, ask, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?" To this objection we may reply in the words of St. Peter, "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." God

is faithful, and will, in some period of duration or other, certainly perform whatever He has promised. His truth will stand secure and firm, though all created things, which were formed only for a temporary duration, shall fade and die. The friendship of men is uncertain and precarious. All things here below are perpetually changing, and nothing is more fluctuating than the state of man. The eye which now regards us with fond affection may soon be closed; the heart which is now united to ours may soon be separated from it; the breast which now glows with sympathetic pleasure, or heaves with sympathetic sorrow, may soon cease to be responsive to the feelings of friendship; the hand which is now ready to assist us, may soon become cold and motionless. Nothing here is certain, but *one great and important event;* the *world itself* passeth away, and all things, both *within* us and *without* us, are hastening apace to dissolution. But amidst this perpetual round of transitory being,

is there in the universe nothing which is fixed and permanent? Yes! there is a Rock upon which we may safely rest. There is a Being who knows no alteration by time, who is eternally good, wise, and powerful, and under the shadow of whose wings we may repose with calm security, amidst all the storms and tempests of mortal life. In seasons of the greatest depression, when the mind is sinking under the weight of accumulated distresses, let us raise our eye from this ever-varying scene to that *self-existent, eternal,* and *immutable Being* who formed, who preserves, who directs the whole, with a view to the highest ultimate moral perfection and happiness.

> "From partial evil still educing good,
> And better thence again, and better still,
> In infinite progression."

Under a dissolution — I mean under a short *suspension* only of those friendships which have virtue for their basis, let us, as the wisest part we can

act, make a friend of the Eternal God. Let us never forget that Eternity is the character not only of his Existence — not only of his Power and Wisdom — but of his Goodness and his Mercy. Let us then cease from placing confidence in man, whose breath is in his nostrils; let us cease from placing confidence in any thing below; let us not put our trust in princes, nor in the greatest of the sons of men, but let us have that Being who is from everlasting to everlasting for our help, and let our hope for ever be in the Lord our God.

LECTURE XXXIII.

THE *Omnipresence* of God is that awful Attribute of his Nature which next claims our attention. It must be confessed, that this likewise is a subject too exalted for our finite understandings fully to comprehend. We may however collect, both from Reason and Scripture, sufficient proofs that it *is* an attribute of the Divine Nature, and at the same time form such conceptions of it as are sufficient to answer the various purposes of Religion. This therefore, we shall attempt in the present Lecture.

Let us, in the first place, briefly consider some of the arguments which are usually brought to prove the Omnipresence of God.

And here we may observe, that all *created* beings, whether they be material or spiritual, have only a *limited* existence. The space upon which a material being is extended, and in which a spiritual being acts, is not *immense* but *circumscribed.* And *who* is it who hath settled the bounds within which the Sun, Moon, and Stars, and all parts of matter exist, as well as appointed a sphere of action for spiritual and immaterial beings? This they could not do of themselves, any more than bring themselves at first into existence. It must therefore have been effected by that Being who originally created them. But the *original Creator of* the world, and the *first Cause* of all things is himself *uncaused* and *independent.* It follows, therefore, from there being *no Cause* of his Existence, and consequently no cause to *limit* his existence, that he must be omnipresent, or infinite.

Again, God is from all Eternity. He is therefore *necessarily existent.* Now for

the same reason that a necessarily existent Being must be *any where*, he must be *every where*; for if he might be absent from *one* place, he might from *all*, and consequently could *not* be necessarily existent. God therefore, who is possessed of necessary existence, must be present in *all parts* of the universe.

But of all the arguments which the light of Nature affords for the Omnipresence of God, the most obvious and convincing, is that which is taken from the consideration of his *works*. The same arguments which prove his Being, his Power, and his Providence, prove likewise his Omnipresence. Since He at first called all things into existence; since He still continues to move the wheels of universal nature, and to uphold and direct all things by His Power, He must be *present* in all parts of his vast dominion. As it is impossible that any being should *act* where it is *not*, and as God

acts through every part of the universe, sustaining and supporting all things by his Providence, He must, of consequence, be *omnipresent.*

It is, moreover, a presumptive argument, in favour of the doctrine of God's omnipresence, that in all ages of the world, it has been an article of belief of the wisest and best men, and by the terrors of conscience for crimes committed in secret, assented to even by the worst men. "Whithersoever thou turnest thyself," (says a celebrated ancient philosopher) "thou wilt find God meeting thee; nothing is void of his presence, he filleth his own work." It is a saying of one of the ancient poets, that "all things are full of God." Of another of them, "that God goeth through the earth and tracts of the sea, and the vast heaven." And of a third, "God is whatsoever thou seest, whithersoever thou movest." On this subject, however, as

well as on all others, in which the perfections and government of God are concerned, the express language of Scripture gives the fullest confirmation to the best deductions of Reason. Nothing can equal the following description of the omnipresence of the Deity. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in Hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the Darkness shall cover me, even the Night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." Besides many other passages in the New Testament, in which this doctrine is asserted in the plainest terms, the Apostle Paul says, "He is not far

from every one of us, for in Him we live and move, and have our being."

Thus striking are the proofs of the Omnipresence of the Deity. But perhaps it may be said, *in what particular manner* does a *spirit exist in certain portions of space*, and in what particular manner does *the Supreme Eternal Spirit* exist through the *whole extent of infinite space?* To these questions I would give an answer, which for the sake of true science and genuine philosophy I wish had been more often given to questions of a similar nature, and that is, *I cannot tell.* Man, whose knowledge is circumscribed within a narrow compass, is too often unwilling to own his ignorance in matters which are far above his comprehension. But whatever may be pretended, certain it is, that our ideas of Spirit in general, are very confused and imperfect. We know, we feel, that our spirits are present in our bodies, and act upon them in a manner

in which they cannot act upon *other* bodies. But *how* this is done we know not. Can we then expect clearly to comprehend the *manner* in which the *all perfect and infinite Spirit* exists at once through *universal space*, and acts in *every part* of the great creation? "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is high, we cannot attain unto it." The scholastic writers, unwilling to confess their ignorance upon any subject, have represented the Immensity of God as a *Point* co-existing with infinite space, as well as his Eternity an *Instant* co-existing with endless duration. But such explanations throw very little light upon the subject. We must acknowledge that there are many things which we know *really are*, though we know not perfectly *how* they are, and amongst these must be reckoned the Omnipresence of the Deity. We are, however, capable of forming some faint, though very inadequate ideas of this glorious perfection. We know by experience that we ourselves are capable

of viewing several objects at the same time, and of acting, at the same time, in different parts of space by the motion of different parts of our bodies. We may conceive of beings of a superior order, possessing these powers in a much higher degree. With regard then to the *supreme all-perfect Being*, we must suppose that He possesses these powers in the *highest* degree; and that He perceives what is done, and acts with the greatest facility, not only in *one* particular part of space, but through the boundless extent of infinite space. Perhaps this is the *only*, or at least the most accurate idea which we are able to form of the Omnipresence of the Deity; it may be represented in fewer words; namely, a knowledge of what is done, and a power of acting, at the same time, in every part of the universe. But this knowledge is very different from, and of a much superior degree to ours. With regard to *Man*, a variety of objects confuses his understanding, and overwhelms his faculties. But

it is not so with God. He is able to contemplate *all* objects at the same time, and without the least confusion. Nor have we any reason to suppose, that the difference which we make between pure and impure places, which arises only from the secondary qualities of bodies affecting our external senses, has any influence upon the Deity. His omnipresent essence is not affected by any of the *natural* evil which is in the universe; nor are the purity and holiness of his nature diminished by the *moral* evil which He beholds, it being his peculiar character to *act* and not *to be acted upon.* But though the Supreme Spirit is thus present in all parts of the universe, He is nevertheless to mortal eyes invisible. Wherever we are He is with us. He beholds us at all times, and is a witness, not only of our words and actions, but of the secret thoughts and intentions of our hearts. "He compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways." But "if we go forward, He is

not there; if we go backward, we cannot behold Him. On the left hand where He doth work, we cannot behold Him, and He hideth himself on the right hand, that we cannot see Him." His throne indeed in Scripture is said to be in *Heaven*, and *that* is represented as the place in which His Honour dwelleth. But all that is meant by this is, that he affords the happy spirits *above* peculiar manifestations of his glory, not that his essence is confined to the celestial world, for even the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and his *real* and *proper presence* is equally in all places.

These are the sentiments which it becomes us to entertain of the Omnipresence of God; an attribute of his nature the consideration of which is productive of many practical advantages. Some of the effects which it is calculated to produce on our minds, and which it ought to produce on them, I shall now briefly enumerate.

And, in the first place, this perfection, so wonderful and excellent, claims our highest veneration and praise.

Our God is not like the gods of the heathen, who presided over certain fields, woods, streams, or valleys, who were the guardians of one particular community, or the tutelar deities of one particular nation. He is the God of the whole universe. All nature is His temple, all space is His abode. He rides upon the circuit of the Heavens. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth. Hell itself is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering. Nor is the light of the Sun necessary to render objects visible to His eye. He formed the sun, moon, and stars, and all the luminaries of Heaven. He lent them all their brightness, and though He should withdraw their light, He would continue to behold all things with the utmost clearness, for "the darkness hideth not from Him, but the night shineth as the day;

the darkness and the light are both alike to Him." Can we contemplate such a Being without feeling our minds inspired with the most profound veneration? Can we contemplate such a Being, and at the same time reflect that He is possessed of every *amiable* perfection, that his *goodness* as well as his *presence*, is over all His works, without feeling our breasts warmed with the fire of pure and sacred devotion? Surely it is impossible. Sustained by His goodness, supported by His providence, and surrounded by His presence, let us praise Him with our hearts, let us praise Him with our lips, and let us praise Him with our whole lives.

Is the Deity present in all parts of the universe, and perfectly acquainted with the tempers and actions of all his creatures? Let the good man rejoice, and the wicked tremble. Is there in life a greater pleasure than that which arises from the company of a *real friend*? Will not the presence of one we love cheer the gloom of

sorrow, alleviate the pangs of affliction, and diffuse an air of peace and serenity over the mind in seasons of the greatest tribulation? To the good then these advantages are always enjoyed in their highest perfection. Though invisible to mortal eyes, there is a Being who surrounds your couch, guards your nightly slumbers, averts from you every impending danger, and watches over you with the fond indulgence of a Parent. He knows all those virtues which you endeavour to conceal from the world, and will reward you for those desires and inclinations to do good, which the want of ability prevented you from executing. Under every affliction which you may be called to endure, remember that you have a Friend at hand who is ready to assist you, and repose yourselves on his everlasting arms, which are sufficient for your support. Do you expect shortly to go the way whence you shall not return? Let not the thought of this give you one moment's anxiety. You cannot go where

your Friend and your God will not be with you. To whatever unknown regions you may be removed, you will still be encircled by his presence. Let it then be the language of every person of true piety—

"Though in the paths of Death I tread
With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
For thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly crook shall give me aid
And guide me through the awful shade."

But as the favour of God is the most valuable of all acquisitions, so his displeasure is much more to be dreaded than that of all other beings in the universe. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from Him; and as it is impossible for a wicked man to avoid His notice, it is equally impossible for him to avoid His displeasure. Let us then always keep in our minds the advice of our Saviour, "Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more

that they can do, but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear Him, who after He hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

To conclude, let the consideration of the Omnipresence of the Deity, influence us to constant watchfulness, to perfect sincerity, to inward purity of heart, and outward regularity of behaviour.

Shall I sum up all the motives which can be urged to a virtuous life in few words? Take them in four words "Thou Lord seest me." "Thou who hast brought me into being, to act an important part on this first scene of rational existence, who will call me to a strict account of all my conduct in the presence of an assembled world, and who will approve or condemn me with the utmost impartiality, art a constant spectator of all my actions, and a witness of all my secret thoughts even before they are ripened

into volitions, or formed into principles of action." This is a most interesting truth. Oh, let it have a proper effect upon our minds, and influence us to banish every vicious thought from our hearts, as well as to assume a proper external behaviour. Let it influence us to be quite as cautious how we act when we are *alone*, as when we are placed upon a crowded theatre. Indeed, properly speaking, we are *never* alone. We are always in the presence of the most *august Personage in the Universe.* We are always in the presence of that Being, who is not only the Creator of *Men*, but the Creator of *Angels.*

Oh! may this thought possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest;
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin — for *God is there.*

LECTURE XXXIV.

To investigate the Divine perfections, as they are displayed in the works of Creation, Providence, and Redemption, is the noblest employment of our intellectual faculties. Some useful lessons of instruction, some inducements to wicked men to amend the error of their ways, and some encouragement to good men to persevere in the practice of their duty, may be deduced, from considering *every* perfection of the Supreme Being. In the ensuing Lecture, I shall direct your attention to the *Omnipotence* of God; endeavour to prove that the first cause of all things must be Almighty, and then point out those practical regards which are due to Him in consequence of possessing this attribute.

The proof of the *infinite Power* of God, is so closely connected with the proof of the *Being* of a God, that it is impossible to acknowledge the strength of the one, without being constrained likewise to yield our assent to the other. Indeed the effects of *Power*, no one has yet ventured to deny, although the effects of *Wisdom* or *Intelligence*, which appear equally evident to an attentive mind, by many have not been acknowledged. The first Cause of all things must Himself be uncaused and independent; and as all things in the universe derive their power from Him, and depend upon Him for its continual exercise, it is impossible that they should be able to resist his Power, which of consequence must be perfect and infinite. Again, an *inactive* Cause, or a cause without power, is in fact no cause at all. That Eternal Spirit, therefore, who called all Nature into existence, must be possessed of power sufficient for his own productions, superior to all which is derived from Him, and consequently

the greatest and most absolute possible. The idea of *Almighty Power* has ever been connected with the idea of a *Supreme Divinity*; and we need only turn our eyes to those objects which are more immediately within our notice, to be convinced that this character belongs to that Being who originally created all things, and who continues to preserve the order and harmony of the universe. To be properly impressed with this conviction, survey this earth on which we dwell, diversified with hills and vales, groves and meadows, woods and plains. View the lofty mountains, the capacious forests, and the widely extended ocean. Consider what a variety of living creatures inhabit the air, the land, the water, every part of the globe; with what wonderful organs and instincts they are endued, and what provision is made for their support and comfort! Consider what power was necessary at first to form, and is necessary still to continue in existence, a whole race of beings of so wonderful, so com-

plex a structure as man! Consider what power was necessary at first to form the whole earth, and to render it a proper habitation for numberless orders of creatures; consider what power is still necessary to roll it round its axis every day, and to send it through such amazing fields of space every year! Consider what power was at first necessary to form such an immense body as the Sun! Consider what power is still necessary to continue its usefulness, and to dart its rays with such inconceivable velocity to all surrounding worlds! Consider what power was necessary at first to form, and is necessary still to preserve the numerous worlds and systems which we have reason to believe exist in the vast universe! Consider what power that must be which at first formed, and still preserves all those rational beings who dwell in heaven and upon earth, and no doubt, in worlds without number! Survey the works of God which are within your view, and reflect upon those which you

have reason to believe exist in distant parts of space, and say, if you do not feel the fullest conviction of this truth, that God is Almighty. Surely every one who considers the effects of *power* with which every part of the universe abounds, must be led to cry out with sentiments of devotion, "Alleluiah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." And if the Omnipotence of God is written in legible chracters in every page of the volume of nature, it is likewise revealed to us with equal clearness in the volume of Scripture. Thus Job says, "he stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing; he bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them; he divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud: Lo! these are part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him! the thunder of his power who can understand!" And the prophet Isaiah, when speaking on this subject, expresses him-

self in this truly sublime language: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught Him? Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity." Upon this subject the sacred writers seem to have exhausted all the power of language, and at last to be sensible that the ideas which they have given, are very imperfect and inadequate.

It is true Omnipotence is an attribute of the Divine Nature, the exercise of which, in some particular instances, we are unable to comprehend. The power of new-modelling the various parts of

matter, of altering its form and of framing new things from pre-existent materials, is what we can easily conceive, as we possess this power in a small degree ourselves. But if we dwell in our minds upon *creative* power, we are lost and bewildered. It is however unreasonable and presumptuous to suppose that because we know not *how* the Divine Being could create matter, it is impossible that it should ever have been created. Without entering into that uninteresting inquiry, whether any thing can proceed from nothing, which by the way is not the proper state of the present question, permit me to ask if there is any thing absurd in the supposition, that the greatest of all Beings should call things into existence which had no existence before? Something like this we find in our own consciousness which but a very short time ago we are convinced had no existence. And it does not appear that there is any thing more inconceivable in the idea of God's calling things from non-existence into

being, than in the supposition that matter is eternal. But if the latter supposition be made, the argument for the Omnipotence of God is not in the least affected by it. Matter is inert, and can only act as it is acted upon. In language as philosophical as it is poetical, it is asked by Young,

" Who *Motion*, foreign to the smallest grain
Shot thro' vast masses of enormous weight?
Who bade rude matter's restive lump assume
Such various forms, and gave it wings to fly?
Has matter more than motion? Has it thought,
Judgment, and genius? Is it deeply learn'd
In mathematics? Has it fram'd such laws,
Which but to guess a Newton made immortal?
If art to form, and counsel to conduct;
And that with greater far than human skill,
Reside not in each block—a Godhead reigns—
And if a God there is, that God *how great!*"

In order to assist us in conceiving rightly of the power of the Most High, I would observe that we are to conceive of it as *adequate to every possible effect*; as *able to produce every possible effect with the greatest ease and expedition*, and *as the cause of the actual existence of every*

being in the universe. At the same time, we are not to suppose that, although it is infinite, it reaches beyond the bounds of possibility, or extends to the doing of that which implies a contradiction. As the human mind is constituted, (and we cannot but suppose that this is a right constitution, and another would be a wrong one,) it must necessarily pronounce concerning axioms in mathematics, that they are true; and that the contrary, as that a part is greater than its whole, is absolutely impossible. To suppose that a power of *reversing* these, which in fact is no power at all, does not belong to the Deity, is no diminution of his glory. As however it becomes us at all times to express ourselves with the utmost reverence when we are speaking of the Most High God, it is advisable to say of things which are in their nature absolutely inconsistent and absurd, that they are *not the objects of power*, or that *they cannot be brought about*, rather than to say that *it is not in the power of God*

to effect them. We cannot be too cautious of our expressions when we are speaking of that great and tremendous Being, who is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and all things that are therein, and who is the Lord and Sovereign of the whole Universe.

And further, if we are desirous to entertain a true notion of the infinite power of God, we must consider it as never exerted but under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness, and in perfect consistence with his *moral* perfections. We may at all times rest assured that every thing which God wills or performs, is perfectly just and good. Not that his willing or performing it is the circumstance which constitutes it just and good, but because the perfection of his nature is such that He never will do a thing which is not antecedently so. To suppose Him capable of pursuing a conduct which is contrary to wisdom, goodness or justice, is not to magnify but to mock

his power. We ought ever to remember that his power is not the power of a tyrant which is exerted without reason, but the power of the most perfect Being in the universe, who always acts agreeably to the dictates of infinite moral perfection. For let it be remembered, that the *moral* attributes of God, or those which are derived from his goodness, belong as properly to his nature, and are as essentially connected with it, as his *natural* ones, or those which proceed from his power. Such is the light in which it becomes us to consider that venerable attribute of the Deity, his Omnipotence.

From this view of the subject it is a legitimate conclusion that there can be no power contrary or opposite to that of God any farther than He Himself, of his unsearchable wisdom permits it. The notion of two eternal and independent principles, the one good and the other evil, which prevailed very much

in the ancient Eastern World, and was afterwards adopted by the Manicheans, (I do not know that it is not now a prevailing opinion among Christians,) must of necessity fall to the ground, if we suppose God to be the Creator of all things, and to have the perfection of power in Himself. As Omnipotence implies Unity, the notion of more Gods than one, if one is allowed to be Almighty, is no less than a contradiction in terms.

From the consideration of this attribute of the Divine Nature, we may further infer, that no doctrines can be true, by whatever authority they come recommended to us, which either imply a natural impossibility in themselves, or suppose that the Deity exercises his power in opposition to wisdom and goodness. The doctrine of transubstantiation may be ranked under the former of these heads, which, as soon as it is offered to our consideration, instead of examining the weight of arguments to prove its

truth, we may, without hesitation, venture to affirm, must of necessity be false. And could I not enumerate many doctrines which have been espoused with great warmth, not only by the members of the Romish church, but by Protestant Christians, and have by them been called the *peculiar doctrines* of the Gospel, which strike directly at the root of most of the perfections of the Supreme Being? This is indeed a most *mortifying* consideration, and shows the vast importance of being well grounded in early life in the knowledge of God and of his righteous administration. Whatever we may be told, or how much soever men may gloss over their opinions, if they imply a want of *goodness* in the Deity, (of which the meanest understanding is capable of judging,) they *are not*, they *cannot* be founded in truth and Scripture. If any doctrine is recommended to our notice which is evidently repugnant to the *moral* perfections of God, by which his power is always regulated, this alone is a suf-

ficient reason for our rejecting it, without entering into the arguments by which it is supported. In these arguments we ought to suspect some fallacy, and in this use of our reasoning powers to express our humility. With whatever caution reverence to the Supreme Being requires us to speak concerning the natural extent of his power, no ill consequences can result from saying that *He cannot do what is wrong.* A perfectly *wise* and *good* being can never do what is unreasonable, malevolent, cruel, or unjust. *He cannot do wickedness, He cannot commit iniquity.* That well-meaning men should, through prejudice and ill-directed zeal, have represented him as acting in this manner, is much to be lamented. It is well for those with whom they are connected; it is well for Society in general, that the good intentions of their hearts often rectify the mistakes of their heads, and that they do not, in the general tenour of their conduct *imitate* the God whom they profess to adore.

Again, if the power of the Deity extends to every possible event, He is the proper object of our religious fear and veneration: if his power is always regulated by wisdom and goodness, He is the proper object of our religious joy and confidence. If absolute power alone were the foundation of his dominion and the rule of his conduct, we should have reason to *fear* Him, but we could not *love* Him. If the happiness of his creatures is the end of his government, and if his power is nothing more than the power of always doing what is wisest and best, He is the most *amiable* character which our imaginations can possibly conceive. To *good* men the consideration of his Omnipotence is a never-failing source of consolation and even of joy, under all the evils of humanity. To *wicked* men the consideration of his Omnipotence is a powerful motive to forsake every evil course and to seek his favour and approbation. Surely it is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the omnipotent God.

In the last place, is the Deity possessed of almighty power? We may then depend upon it, that He is *able* to perform the promise which He has made to good men, that they shall be raised from the dead by Jesus Christ, and be admitted into a state of eternal glory and felicity. Whatever difficulties speculative men may imagine there is in the notion of a resurrection, we need not doubt that that Being who first formed our bodies of the dust of the earth, *can*, from their ruins, form a spiritual and incorruptible body. In *what manner* this is to be done, or *what* it is which constitutes *sameness* of person, it is by no means necessary to inquire. I am willing to acknowledge that the subject is *above* our comprehension. Is there not reason to believe that every particle of the human body is changed before a person reaches the period of advanced age? And the difficulty of shewing how, notwithstanding this change, the identity of person remains, is as great as the difficulty of shewing *how the same*

person can be raised from the dead after his body has mixed with the common earth. Neither of these subjects can we perfectly understand. The difficulty however in both cases appears to be equal. And as we have the evidence of sense for the former, we have no reason to entertain a suspicion of the latter, which is in reality only an exertion of the same power. We are assured by God himself that a resurrection is not only possible but certain. The consideration of his almighty power is a sufficient ground of reliance upon the truth of this assertion, and ought to lead us, during the afflictions of life, and under the approach of death, to rejoice that this corruptible will put on incorruption, and that this mortal will put on immortality.

LECTURE XXXV.

HAVING in our last Lecture endeavoured to give you as clear an idea as possible of the *Power* of God, I shall now lay before you some observations on his *Wisdom*, a perfection of his Nature, from the consideration of which we may draw many practical advantages, and which we may place before us as a pattern for our imitation, as far as the weakness of our faculties will admit.

Though the terms *knowledge* and *wisdom* are often used promiscuously, yet in strict propriety of speech there is a difference between them. Dr. Paley says, "Wisdom always supposes *action*, and action *directed by it*." To show the necessity of the latter clause, we may observe

that experience and observation teach us to distinguish between acting with *design* and acting *wisely*. The former is essential to *all* rational beings, the latter consists in the proper *use* or *application* of knowledge. To constitute a being *intelligent* it is sufficient that he act with *any design at all*, or be capable of design, but to constitute a being *wise* it is necessary that the design which he has in view be *good* and *laudable*; and that he pursue it by the use of the best means. Knowledge therefore is, properly speaking, an *original* power or faculty, and wisdom the *right use*, or *exercise* of this faculty. Hence it follows that there may be *knowledge* without *wisdom*; but there cannot be wisdom without knowledge. And indeed there may be knowledge without design; but design is essentially included in the idea of wisdom. And though in *human* characters the qualities of knowledge and wisdom, design and wise design are often separated, yet in the *Divine Nature* they are always united, and the same argu-

ments which prove the one, likewise demonstrate the other. The *perfection* of wisdom — that which belongs to God, and to *God alone*, consists in knowing always the best *ends;* in seeing the *means* which will produce these ends; in knowing *how to apply* those means, and in having always an *inclination* or *will* to act accordingly. From the last part of this description it appears that though wisdom and goodness may be considered as *distinct* qualities, yet they are *inseparably connected*, at least that wisdom cannot exist without goodness.

That wisdom, thus defined, is an essential attribute of the Divine Nature, will appear from considering God as *omnipresent*, *independent*, and the *original Creator* of all things. An *infinite intelligent* Being *cannot possibly err* in *his judgment* concerning those *ends* which are best and most worthy to be accomplished. The *original Creator* of all things, who has given to every creature

all its powers, and appointed all the circumstances of its existence, must be acquainted with all the powers He gave, and consequently cannot but *know* what means are adapted to all ends, and *how to apply* them. And an *independent* Being, whose Power no force can resist, and whose Inclination nothing can oppose, must always be both *able* and *willing* to *do* what He knows it is *best He should* do. The Divine Being, therefore, who is the Parent of the Universe, ever present with all the works of his hand, and absolutely independent in his own Nature, is of consequence possessed of *infinite* or *perfect Wisdom*,

But further, whatever those circumstances may be, which limit the wisdom of *human* and *other finite beings*, certain it is, that they do not affect the *Supreme*, *infinite*, and *independent* Being. We ourselves, who are imperfect and mortal creatures, are not capable of knowing and doing, in all circumstances, what is

best. And what is the reason of this? Namely, because we have such faculties communicated to us, and no higher. The existence and capacities of our minds are dependent upon the will and powers of *another.* But the *first Cause of all things* exists independently on all power and will. His capacities, therefore, as they are not bounded by any power or will, must be *unlimited.* Upon this account, He cannot but always *know,* and be *able* to accomplish what is *best;* and as his Will is not, like ours, influenced sometimes by *Caprice* or *Passion,* but by an invariable regard to what is right and fit, He cannot but *act,* as perfect Rectitude and unerring Wisdom demand.

Thus far then we have proved the Wisdom of God from the *other* Perfections of his Nature. I add, that it evidently appears in those degrees of Wisdom, which *He has imparted to his Creatures.* Limited as our understandings are, when compared with those of an-

gelic natures, and especially when compared with that Intelligence, which planned the vast system of the universe; yet have we abundant reason to rejoice that we are made so much wiser than the other creatures in this lower world, and capable of knowing *so much* of our Maker and ourselves, of the *Ends* which Providence had in view in our creation, and of the *Means* by which we may secure our highest dignity and happiness. Blessed be God, we have powers, by which we are capable of making, at present, great advances in knowledge, and which we hope will *hereafter* be raised to a much higher degree of perfection. Now there is no truth in nature which is more evident, than that every *effect* must have a *cause* which is able to produce it, and that every perfection which belongs to the *effect*, must belong to the Cause, in a still greater degree. And *who* is it, who is the Cause of *our* Wisdom? Who is it who has furnished us with all our capacities and means of improvement? Who

is it who hath communicated to angelic beings their powers, and in a word, "given knowledge to all that have understanding?" It is *God* who has done all these things. He is the Fountain, from which all the Wisdom, which flows through the whole universe, is derived. Justly therefore does He, who has communicated so much Wisdom to other beings, and who must consequently possess it Himself, in a much higher degree than all other beings, merit the character which, with so much sublimity, is given of Him in Scripture, of, "the only wise God."

But the most obvious proof of the Wisdom of the Deity, and that which, though level to the lowest understanding, produces the fullest conviction to the highest, is taken from *the consideration of his works.* To do justice to this argument is impossible, as every law of nature, and every creature that God has formed is itself a complete instance of its validity;

whence we see the propriety of the exclamation of the Psalmist, "O Lord how manifold are thy works, in Wisdom, hast Thou made them all." We cannot indeed enumerate *all* those marks of wise design with which we are, or may be acquainted. And there is the utmost reason to believe that there are many things, the uses of which we are not able at present to investigate; which to those beings who can take a more comprehensive view of the divine plan, serve to give still clearer and more convincing proofs of the Divine Wisdom. If at present there are any appearances which we cannot reconcile with this perfection, it is owing solely to our *Ignorance.* Finite creatures can never be supposed to comprehend all the schemes of an *infinite* Mind. We can only "reason from what we *know.*" And as our knowledge is confined to a few *objects*, and cannot discover all their powers, properties and uses; our reasoning, even upon those subjects which come within the sphere of our observation,

must be exceedingly vague and indeterminate. It is however worthy of notice, that the *more* we know of the works of Nature, the more evidence do we discover of *wise contrivance*, and the more are we excited to venerate, love, and adore the God of Nature. We have sufficient reason to conclude from that *partial* view, which we are at present able to take of the Divine Works, (and O how strongly should we feel this truth, if we could view *all* his works!) that *the happiness of his Creatures is the grand end of his operations*, and that this end is pursued by the best and most effectual means. The provision which is made through every part of Nature for the preservation and happiness of innumerable orders of beings; the uniformity and variety which every where prevail; the many effects which proceed from one cause; and the many causes which contribute to produce one effect; the perpetual circulations which take place in the Universe; the due proportions and equal balances which

are every where preserved; and, in a word, the beauty, order, and harmony of the whole visible creation, loudly proclaim this truth, that the Lord God of Hosts is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." *Our* understandings can attend to but a few things at once, and are soon embarrassed. But how great must be *that* understanding, which takes under its guidance the whole Heaven and Earth, and all things in them, and conducts the celestial orbs along their course, without neglecting the meanest animal or vegetable! If it be said that all the revolutions which take place in the universe, are brought about by *certain fixed and stated Laws*, which are called the *Laws of Nature*, I would ask, how great must be *that Mind* which *planned* these laws, and which takes care that they are *constantly and invariably* observed, excepting only in those cases, when, to announce a revelation from himself to his creatures, He sees fit to suspend them. The general Laws of Nature are a greater proof of

the wisdom of the Deity, than if He acted without the intervention of second causes. The least attention to those of them with which we are acquainted, will convince us that they are established in wisdom, and that any alteration in them would involve the universe in the utmost disorder and confusion.

To bring about the great purpose of the Divine administration, what perpetual revolutions are taking place in the *material* world, and what a variety of wheels are constantly in motion! The sun, the rain, and the earth, all unite their influence to produce vegetables, which are necessary for the sustenance of man and beast. With respect to *vegetables*, we may observe that those which are *most useful*, such as grass, and the like, grow in *almost all* countries, and with little or no cultivation; and that in every land those plants are most common which are most suitable to the inhabitants. In the *animal* inhabitants of the world,

we can never sufficiently admire their several organs of sensation, respiration, and motion; the provision which is made for their defence and security; the surprising instincts with which they are endued, and the laws by which the several species of them are preserved and kept distinct. The constitutions of animals are moreover adapted to the climate in which they are placed, and their organs fitted for those different circumstances in existence for which they are intended, and especially for the element in which they are chiefly to live. But the most wonderful of all the works of God in this lower world, is *Man.* Man, therefore, "the great Master of all;" and he for whose use, among other purposes, the *inferior* animals were intended, well deserves our most serious and attentive consideration. The human *body* is a most curious and finished piece of workmanship, and evidently the effect of a Divine hand. The human *mind,* with what exalted faculties is it

endued! It is capable of perceiving, thinking, feeling, judging, reasoning, choosing, acting; and what is its most valuable prerogative, of knowing, praising, obeying, and, in a faint degree, of imitating, its Maker. How admirably are our different powers adapted to the purposes of *animal* and *rational* life! We are capable of experiencing all the pleasures which *sense* can afford, and likewise of enjoying the superior delights of *science*, and the most exalted, the appropriate satisfactions of *Religion*. The *understanding* is the faculty which points out its own proper use and improvement, not only directing the exercise of all our other powers, but affording itself an eminent pleasure far superior to all sensual gratifications. It is *virtue* which raises our nature to the highest dignity which it can attain at present, and which will raise it hereafter to a much higher state of dignity and felicity: and virtue, even in this world, is attended with the greatest delight and complacency. In all these respects, and in many more,

the wisdom of God appears in a striking manner in our frame and constitution. Let me likewise just add, under this head, that He has abundantly manifested it in that plan which He formed and executed for the future and eternal happiness of mankind by the Gospel. Jesus Christ is "the Power and Wisdom of God to the salvation of those that believe."

These are some of the arguments which reason affords in proof of the *Infinite Wisdom* of God. After this one general observation more, that every fresh discovery in philosophy is a discovery of another instance of the Divine Wisdom, I proceed, in the last place, to add that these arguments are confirmed and established by the whole tenour and language of Revelation. We are taught in the sacred writings, that "God is wise in heart," and that "Wisdom and Might are his:" we are assured that "He hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched

forth the heavens by his discretion." We are told that, "He giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to all them that have understanding." And to sum up the whole, the Apostle John has expressed his character in these emphatical terms, "God is Light, and in Him is no Darkness at all."

Next to *Goodness*, with which it is closely connected, that attribute which we have been considering is the most *amiable* of the Divine Nature. Since then wisdom belongs to God, and strictly speaking, belongs to Him alone, let us ascribe unto Him, as we are taught to do in the Sacred Writings, "all honour and praise for ever."

Again, let the consideration of the perfect wisdom of God teach us *Humility*. Strange it is that such imperfect creatures as we are should ever experience such a passion as pride. Even the wisdom of the wisest of men bears not so

great a proportion to that of the Divine Being, as a drop of water does to the ocean, or the faint glimmering of the glow-worm's light to the glorious lustre of the noon-day sun. Besides, it becomes us to consider, that we possess nothing but what we have received. Surely then it can be no reason for Pride, that God has been liberal to us, and favoured us with superior advantages to others. This is a proper foundation for *thankfulness*, and ought to remind us of our *accountableness* for our talents.

It is in our *power* in some degree; it must then be our *duty* in that degree, to *imitate* the Wisdom of God. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." And let it not be forgotten by us, that "the fear of the Lord, that only is true Wisdom, and to depart from evil, that only is true Understanding."

Again, if God is perfectly wise, under

all the troubles of life we may repose our confidence in Him, and cheerfully acquiesce in all the dispensations of his Providence. Difficulties at present we must expect to meet with, as "we know only in part, and see only in part." When the final consummation of all things will take place, the Wisdom of God will be manifested before Angels and Men, and it will appear, that many of those things which we at present think Evils, were necessary parts of the whole system, and that they contributed to bring about the greatest sum of Perfection and Happiness.

To conclude our observations on this most important and interesting subject, let us be induced, by what has been said, to an attentive study of the works of God. Every branch of natural history and philosophy, if the idea of God be associated with it, as surely it ought to be, will inspire us with exalted ideas of the Divine Wisdom, and produce the happiest effect

upon the mind. This is, perhaps, the noblest employment of our intellectual faculties, and a proper preparation for the happiness of a future state. It will certainly afford us the most exquisite sense of pleasure, tranquillize the mind when too much agitated by the cares of life, and by viewing the miseries which at present, no doubt for the wisest purposes, are suffered to abound; harmonise all its powers; furnish us with the most useful knowledge, and give us the most grand and elevated conceptions of the Supreme Parent of the Universe — the God — the Father, and the Friend of all.

" Happy are they whom these delights can touch,
Whose candid bosoms the refining love
Of Nature warms. In Nature's book they read
The transcript of the Deity. On every part,
They trace the bright impressions of his hand:
In earth or air; the meadow's purple stores;
The moon's mild radiance or *' the solar rays*
Beaming with more effulgence,' they behold
That uncreated Beauty which delights
The Mind Supreme. They also feel her charms
Enamour'd; they partake th' eternal joy."

AKENSIDE.

LECTURE XXXVI.

THE reflection on the Eternity, Omniscience, and Omnipotence of God, has a natural tendency to fill the mind with Reverence, Awe, and Admiration. But were these the only attributes of the Deity, He would indeed be the object of our *slavish fear;* but we should never contemplate his Perfections with any degree of *Satisfaction* and *Delight.* Arrayed in robes of dreadful Majesty, and surrounded on every side with awful Glories, we should never venture to approach his throne, but with sentiments of *Terror* and *Astonishment.* It is the *Goodness* of the Deity which renders him the object of our *Love;* it is this amiable attribute which lays the foundation for our religious Confidence, and supports

our feeble minds under all the evils to which human nature is exposed. If we be firmly convinced that that glorious Being, who presides over the universe, is perfectly *benevolent*, all is well. We have every thing to hope, and nothing to fear, but moral evil. Our happiness is secure, both for time and Eternity. It is therefore of the utmost importance, that we be well grounded in a belief of the *Goodness* of God; and it is a matter of the greatest joy, that there is no attribute of his Nature which is more fully displayed in all his works, and the proofs of which are more evident and striking. The whole frame of the universe loudly proclaims the goodness of the great first Cause of all; in every part of the vast Creation, we perceive the largest provision made for the comfort and Happiness of different orders of beings. Nor do we discover any Evils which are not necessary for a greater good, which do not arise from the necessary imperfection of Matter, or which are not the Consequence of what

is ordered with the kind Intention of promoting upon the whole the greatest degree of Perfection and Happiness. That this is really the case, I hope will plainly appear, from the survey we are going to take of some of the known general Laws of the divine Government. One of the best methods of proving the *Goodness* of God, is to consider what are the effects of the Laws which he has ordained. If they appear to be productive of general happiness, the necessary consequence is, that their Author is a benevolent Being. In what follows, I shall consider separately some of the most remarkable general Laws by which the Deity governs the World, and endeavour to shew what Consequences would arise (*cæteris manentibus*) from their being altered. In order to preserve the Regularity of any System, either natural or moral, it is necessary that it be governed by *general Laws*. If this were not the case, no Order or Regularity could subsist at all; there would be no room for Prudence

and Foresight — no one would know in any circumstances what to expect — and nothing but Disorder and Confusion would every where prevail. Now as general laws have for their object the *good of the whole*, and as *universal* and *partial* good are in some cases distinct Objects, and may be promoted by different means, it is impossible but that general Laws (Laws which are ordained for the happiness of the universe at large, and consequently of an infinite multitude of beings) may in certain cases oppose the private good of Individuals. This it was necessary to premise, to obviate any objections which might arise from the Evils consequent upon general Laws. We do not deny that they may be the Cause of Evil to a *part* considered as unconnected with the *whole*, but as the good of the *whole* is preferable to that of a *part*, every law which has a tendency to promote *general good*, though it may be sometimes hurtful to *Individuals*, is nevertheless benevolent. And if it appear that this is the case with re-

spect to the general laws of the Divine government, the goodness of their Author is plainly demonstrated. As the field of Nature is too extensive for us to range through the whole, and as in many cases we cannot exactly determine which are general laws, we shall only take notice of a few of those which are most obvious and striking, and these we shall divide into three classes, those of the *material*, the *animal*, and the *intellectual* world.

As the law of *Attraction* is the most extensive and important of any in the *Material* world, we shall confine our speculations under this head to that alone.

Attraction is of two kinds, *Attraction of Cohesion*, and *Attraction of Gravitation*. The former is a disposition in bodies to move towards each other, only when *they are very near together*. The latter is a disposition in bodies to move to-

wards each other *even at a very great distance:* its force is greater or less, according to the quantity of matter which any bodies contain, and in proportion to their distances.

In consequence of the principle of *Cohesion,* the several component parts of all the bodies in the universe continue united. Take away this principle, and the universe would only abound with atoms. The planets would be shattered to pieces by their swift rotation round their axes, and the parts of which they are composed would be diffused abroad through all the circumambient space. In consequence of the principle of *Gravitation,* what various! what surprising effects are produced! It is this which binds together the whole material system, constituting the primary quality of every particle of matter, and acting in proportion to its quantity. It is this which occasions the pressure of the air, the ebbing and flowing of the sea, the

flux of rivers, and the descent of rain. Without this wise and benevolent provision to counteract the projectile force of the planets, they would all dart from their orbits, and continue to fly in straight lines through the vast extent of infinite space. Were some other provision made by the Deity to continue the earth in its orbit, still, if the principle of gravity ceased to operate, it would be but a rude and confused mass, incapable of supporting life, or yielding any enjoyment. In vain would every animal be formed with lungs to breathe the vital air: the air would no longer continue to surround the earth; but departing from it, would leave about it an empty void. The waters of the sea no longer attracted by the moon, would stagnate; and the ground, deprived of rain, would no longer bring forth fruit; so important, so universal, are the effects of *Attraction.* If *attraction of cohesion* ceased to operate, not one *material body* would continue to exist; if *attraction of gravitation*

ceased, no *system* would continue in being. Take away the former principle, the universe would be full of atoms: take away the latter,

"*Earth* would unbalanc'd from its orbit fly,
Planets and *Worlds* run lawless thro' the sky,
Heav'n's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And nature tremble to the throne of God."

POPE.

When we consider what vast, surprizing and various effects are produced by this single principle of Attraction, who can forbear crying out, my God! how wise! how great Thou art! When we reflect that all these effects are produced to answer the most *benevolent* intentions, who can forbear, in pious rapture, to exclaim, My God! how *good* Thou art! It would be a pleasing task to consider more largely the benefits which arise from the principle of *Attraction*; but as they appear so plain, even upon the most superficial view of the subject, we shall dwell no longer upon them, but proceed to consider some of the general

laws, which take place in the *animal creation.* And the first law which we shall take notice of under this head, is that which ordains that one species of animals should prey upon another. This law, to a tender and compassionate mind, may at first view, perhaps, appear rather hard and cruel. The Pythagoreans, among the ancients, thought it unlawful to feed on the flesh of animals; and some of the Indian nations abstain from it to this day. Their opinion that the souls of men after death pass into the bodies of animals, seems to have been one reason why the Pythagoreans refused to eat flesh, though they abstain from it likewise through motives of tenderness and compassion, and because they thought it excited in men a cruel and savage temper.

When we can prove that those general Laws which, upon a superficial view, appear to be productive of evil, have in fact a tendency to promote general Hap-

piness, we build the goodness of the Supreme Being, upon the most firm and solid foundation. And that it is for the Happiness of the Animal Creation in general, that one species of them should prey upon another, will plainly appear, from considering what events would take place, provided this law were reversed, and every thing else to remain in its present situation. As Life is the greatest blessing which the Deity can bestow, he hath distributed it in vast profusion, through every part of his works. The atmosphere which surrounds the earth — the sea — the rivers — the woods and plains — every plant and every leaf — in a word every part of Matter, swarms with beings which partake of Life, and with it some degree of enjoyment. Now the vegetables which the earth spontaneously produces, are insufficient to support the lives of such an infinite number of animals. Were it not a general Law that one species of them should prey upon another, many species would soon be-

come extinct. Plants and vegetables would be too slender and simple a food for lions, wolves, and tigers; and if it were sufficient to sustain their Lives, still they would be unable to acquire it for themselves. Their claws, teeth, and amazing strength, were given them for different purposes, and would be of no use at all to them, were vegetables alone their food. All the animals of the carnivorous kind, if deprived of flesh, would languish, faint, and die. There are an innumerable multitude of insects, whose only sustenance is the flesh of putrified bodies; were they deprived of this, they too would lose their existence, and the air would become extremely impure and unwholesome, by the exhalations which would arise from putrified carcases. If therefore it were no longer a general law, that one species of animals should live upon another, many species would be entirely lost, and consequently that regular gradation which takes place in the scale of animal life, would be broken. Nor

is this the only bad consequence which would arise, if this law took place no longer. There are many kinds of animals which multiply to an amazing degree, were not some of those to be devoured by others, their number would soon fill the earth, and spread terror and devastation every where. Every animal must have food to sustain its life, and is it not an instance of Goodness in the Former of the world, that even that food should be for some time animated and capable of sensation and enjoyment? This law which we are considering, is not only ordained for the advantage of Man, and of those animals which feed upon others, it is likewise advantageous to those which are destined to become their prey; even their happiness is on the whole hereby promoted. Were not their flesh intended for the food of Man, they must either be destroyed to prevent their multiplying too fast, or be driven into deserts, where they would die with hunger, or they would consume the vege-

table creation, and perhaps, through want of sustenance destroy themselves. Instead of these, they are fed and defended by Man. Their lives are rendered comfortable and happy, and their death, though violent, is less painful than it would be, if brought upon them by the gradual advances of disease. They are never unhappy through the fear and expectation of death. Pains arising from this quarter, are only allotted to Man. The tender Lamb, which is shortly to bleed, to supply our wants, ignorant of the fate that awaits him, skips about contented and happy,

" Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flowery food,
And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood."
POPE.

That one species of animals therefore should prey upon another, cruel as it may at first view appear, is a general law which was dictated by perfect benevolence, in order to promote the happiness of the whole system of animal beings.

The next general law which we shall take notice of under this head, is that by which the several species of animals are kept distinct. Uniformity amidst variety, takes place in every part of the creation of God. What a vast variety of animals inhabit the terraqueous globe! There have been already discovered and arranged more than 2000 different species of birds, 200 of quadrupeds, 12,000 of insects, and about 3000 of fishes. Yet notwithstanding this variety, what a manifest uniformity every where prevails! That this uniformity may be preserved, animals of one species, in consequence of an instinct implanted within them by the Deity, only mix with those of the same species with themselves; and when two kinds resemble each other so much in their outward form, that their difference is not sufficient entirely to controul the instinct of the sexes, there is no farther propagation of this sort: the breed terminates in the first production, and no new species arises. A few words

will be sufficient to shew the advantages arising from this law. If it were reversed, that beauty and harmony which take place in the animal creation, would soon give place to deformity and confusion; the world would teem with monsters, and the fables of the ancient poets, which abound with descriptions of Centaurs, Satyrs, Syrens, and Minotaurs, would become real. That the several species of animals therefore, are preserved distinct, is the consequence of a general law, which is founded in wisdom and benevolence.

By another general law, which takes place in the animal world, all the active powers with which every animal being is endued, when exercised in that degree which answers the end for which they were given, afford *Pleasure.*

To observe the delight which the inferior animals take in the gratification of their natural propensities, must afford

satisfaction to every benevolent mind. With what pleasure does every animal receive the food which nature has provided for its support! How joyfully does it follow the dictates of every instinct! With respect to those methods which are taken to preserve both the individual and the species, the Former of the world has in every instance mixed the *utile dulci.*

In consequence of this law on which we are speaking, those animals which are fond of agility, delight in running, leaping and such like exercises; whilst the strong take a pleasure in drawing, carrying burdens and other exertions of strength. We know from our own experience, and particularly from what we see in children, that those faculties which are remarkably vigorous afford a peculiar pleasure in their use and exercise, if not carried to a very *violent* degree. Now, in consequence of this law, all creatures are principally led to

those kinds of action which they chiefly excel in, and by which they may be most beneficial to themselves and others. Even those animals which are designed to be the drudges of the creation, are not, on that account, miserable as we might at first imagine: for labour proportioned to their strength is pleasing to them. The courser at full speed, if not cruelly treated, enjoys the race, and the horses and the hounds, (to which it seems more natural,) perhaps enjoy the principal pleasures of the chase. Even the pack-horse plods on the road, under a moderate burden, with ease and satisfaction. It is this law alone which renders life agreeable to the brutal creation. Were every animal endued with active powers, the exercise of which excited pain, the whole creation, instead of abounding with happiness, would be full of misery. Were this the case, our ears would no longer be delighted with the music of the groves, nor our benevolent affections gratified by con-

templating the satisfaction and happiness, which in the general course of things are experienced by all the animals below us. But the happy effects of this law are not confined to the *brutal* creation. They are likewise experienced by *man*. They are without doubt experienced by the highest order of created intelligences. The exercise of all our bodily organs, in that degree which answers the purposes for which they were given us, is always attended with pleasure. The eye takes pleasure in seeing; the ear in hearing; all our senses are the inlets of enjoyment. The gratification of every natural appetite and propensity is a source of satisfaction and delight. The same law takes place with respect to our *mental* faculties. The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of our rational powers is always attended with pleasure. That this is the consequence of a wise and benevolent general law, appears from this consideration. The proper exercise of all our powers both of body and mind,

is productive of usefulness either to ourselves or others. We have no faculties either of enjoyment or action which have not their respective uses. And because this is the case, it is wisely ordered that when they are *not* employed, we experience very disagreeable sensations. Excepting the time which nature has allotted for the repose of our active powers, we can never be happy when they are unemployed; and I have just observed that whenever they are employed they may be useful. Even the exercise of the *passions*, in a moderate degree, is likewise pleasing, those only excepted which are founded on *Fear* and *Hatred*. Now it is impossible that the object of *Fear* should be pleasing, because it is the design of that passion to make us run away from, and avoid it. And if the exercise of *Hatred* had been agreeable, we should have taken delight in a state of war and slaughter. But all the other passions, when moderately exercised, afford pleasure: such

as admiration, joy, love, and all its various modifications. Nay, there is something soothing and agreeable in grief, if it proceed from a generous cause and such as the moral sense approves.

——————"Ask the faithful youth
Why the cold urn of her whom long he lov'd,
So often fills his arms; so often draws
His lonely footsteps at the silent hour,
To pay the mournful tribute of his tears?
O! he will tell thee that the wealth of worlds
Should ne'er seduce his bosom to forego
That sacred hour, when stealing from the noise
Of care and envy, sweet remembrance soothes
With virtue's kindest looks his aching breast,
And turns his tears to rapture."

AKENSIDE.

It is therefore most wisely and kindly ordered that all the active powers with which every animal being is endued, when properly exercised, afford pleasure. Did not this general law prevail, the whole animal world would experience perpetual misery. They would be miserable when in action, and they would be miserable when unemployed. In such circumstances, many of the wheels

of nature would stand still. All new discoveries in the useful arts would be prevented, and a total inactivity would take place in every part of the animal creation.

LECTURE XXXVII.

In the prosecution of our design to illustrate the Goodness of God from the consideration of the benevolent tendency of some of the known general Laws of Nature, in the *Material*, the *Animal*, and the *Intellectual* world, we considered, under the first of these heads, the Law of *Attraction;* and under the second, the three following Laws:

In the first place, The Law which ordains that one species of animals should prey upon another:

Secondly, The Law by which the several species of animals are kept distinct:

And in the third place, this general law, which takes place in the animal

world, that All the active powers with which every animal being is endued, when exercised in that degree which answers the end for which they were given, afford Pleasure.

We shall now proceed to the consideration of another general Law of the animal world, which in its operation will appear to be productive of happiness; which is, that — Every being, within a certain sphere of action, is capable of affecting others, and of being affected by them.

This Law, as it is more peculiar to Mankind, so it is of the utmost use and importance to *them*. Every individual of the human race, is insufficient of himself to supply all his wants, and to gratify all the desires of his nature. Much, very much of our happiness depends upon others. We could hardly acquire *for ourselves* even the *Necessaries*, much less the *Conveniences* and *Elegancies* of

Life. Were every man to procure his own food — to make his own cloathing — to build his own habitation; — in a word, entirely to throw off his dependence upon others, Life would be one continued scene of anxiety, fatigue, and trouble. And though it were possible for every one to procure to himself the *necessaries* of Life, still, if this general Law on which we are speaking, took place no longer, man would be a forlorn and miserable being indeed. All the finer feelings of which the human heart is susceptible; all those refined pleasures for which alone a wise man would wish to live, arise from a connexion with others. Hence the soft endearments, the pleasing emotions, which virtuous love inspires; hence the joys which those experience, whose hearts are united in the bonds of friendship — hence the tender care — the pleasing solicitude which warms the parental breast; and hence all the delights which arise from social and relative connexions. Were we deprived

of all the pleasures which flow from this source, miserable indeed would be the lot of Humanity. It must be acknowledged, that in consequence of our happiness being so much dependent upon others, some evils will necessarily arise; but when set in competition with the good which this general Law produces, they are not worthy to be named. Where is the man who would wish, on any conditions, to be deprived of every social enjoyment, and to spend the whole of his life in a state of perfect solitude? A state of perfect solitude, to beings formed as we are, would be a state of perfect misery. Were every social connexion to be dissolved, were we no more to experience the joys of Love, Friendship, or those which arise from relative connexions, who would not wish for a speedy departure out of the world? In such circumstances, it would be the language of every wise man, "Welcome Death! Thou friend to the distressed; thou kind conductor from a scene of

misery to regions more peaceful and happy." From this Law, which we have been considering, and the beneficial influences of which are in a peculiar manner, experienced by Man, we shall pass to those which take place in the *Intellectual World.* And the first Law which we shall take notice of under this head, is the *Law of Habit.*

In consequence of this Law, actions, by being frequently repeated, first become easy, afterwards pleasant, and at last almost necessary. This is one of the most useful and important Laws of our Nature; it is necessary to promote our comfort and happiness in the present world, and it is necessary for us, considered as in a state of moral probation and discipline. Did the Law of Habit cease to operate, we should be incapable of learning any thing; and a final period would be put to all improvements in every mechanical, useful, and entertaining art. The facility and expedition with which a person who

has been for some time in trade, performs his business, is solely owing to the Law of Habit. Without this, after several years of the closest application, he would be as ignorant of the arts of his occupation, as he was at first. * Though all the finer arts may in some measure depend upon natural genius and capacity, yet if the Law of Habit took place no longer, they could never be carried to any degree of perfection. The first production of a Rubens or a Raphael, would be very imperfect and defective. Even a Corelli, or a Handel, had they been deprived of the assistance of Habit, would have been unable to make any progress in the art of music. Upon this Law, all improvements in every art which can sweeten and adorn human life, and in every branch of useful science depend.

* It appears evident, that as, without instinct, the infant would not live to become a man; so, without habit, Man would remain an infant through life, and would be as helpless, as unhandy, as speechless, and as much a child in understanding, at sixty, as at three years of age. — STEWART, M. L.

But the Law of Habit is not only necessary for our comfort and happiness in this world — it is in consequence of it, that we are capable of arriving at higher degrees of felicity hereafter. Virtue does not consist in one single action, but in a certain fixed and uniform temper of mind. They are habits of virtue, acquired by frequent acts which form this temper, and which constitute a virtuous character. I am aware here of an objection against the goodness of this Law. It may be said, that as in consequence of the Law of Habit, we may learn to do right, we may likewise learn to do wrong. This cannot be denied; but it seems impossible to be avoided, unless the Deity made use of such an overbearing influence upon the minds of his creatures, as would render human life no longer a state of trial.

It is true, we may form bad habits as well as good ones; but if this were not the case, we should cease to be moral

agents, and our virtue being compulsive, would be entitled to no reward. There are many important branches of virtue which it would be impossible for us to practise, if we were not liable to acquire vicious habits. Were we not exposed to vicious habits, we could never acquire the virtuous ones of fortitude, temperance, and a command over our appetites and passions. To be able to resist temptations is a very important branch of virtue: this we could never practise if there were no possibility of our acquiring vicious inclinations. Besides, the consideration that repeated acts of vice produce habits, and that these habits are hard to be rooted out, and virtuous ones implanted in their stead, must have a powerful influence to restrain us from every—the least sinful indulgence. And, farther, the strongest principle in our nature is a desire of happiness: this operates with great force in the breasts of all men. Now, we learn from both reason and Revelation, that

virtue and happiness are always connected, and vice and misery. That the law of Habit, therefore, is productive of more good than evil, plainly appears from this circumstance, that the strongest and most powerful principle in our nature leads us to acquire habits of virtue.

I shall only take notice of one more general law which takes place in the intellectual world, which is this. The exercise of Benevolence is always attended with pleasure.

That man is designed by his Maker to be a benevolent being, and that the circumstances in which he is placed are adapted to promote and cherish in him a benevolent temper, appears from the consideration of his nature and constitution, and from the various relations of life. Happy is it for us that the exercise of those virtues for which we were principally designed, and which have the

greatest tendency to promote the happiness of the whole human race, are always attended with the highest satisfaction. There is no principle which has so immediate a tendency to promote the happiness of society in general;—there is no principle the exercise of which is attended with half that pleasure as benevolence. It is this which fills the mind with delight on contemplating the happiness which reigns in every part of the animal creation; and it is this which makes us capable of enjoying all the happiness of others. As all the laws of the Divine Government have a tendency to promote general good, did we not take pleasure in seeing this benevolent intention answered, the contemplation of the works of God would ever be attended with the most uneasy sensations. Were the exercise of benevolence attended with pain, or, in other words, were man a *malevolent* being, he must likewise be a *miserable* being; for malevolence and misery are inseparably

connected. That the exercise of those affections, therefore, which have a tendency to promote general happiness is always attended with pleasure, is the consequence of a most wise and benevolent law, and as strong a proof as can possibly be urged of the goodness of the Deity.

It would be very easy to mention many more general laws of the Divine Government, all of which have a manifest and immediate tendency to promote general happiness; but to do this, or to dwell more largely upon those which have already been taken notice of, would oblige me to extend this Lecture to an unreasonable length. I will, therefore, close this part of the subject by observing, that if the goodness of the Supreme Being plainly appears from the consideration of those general laws which are known to us, (and it does appear in every law, and the degree is in proportion to our knowledge,) it would

be highly unjust and unreasonable to suppose that those laws with which we are unacquainted are not calculated to answer the same benevolent intentions. Such a supposition would be in the highest degree absurd: and I am firmly convinced, that the more we are acquainted with the works of God, the deeper our philosophical researches are made, the more fully shall we be grounded in a belief that, that glorious Being who made the universe, and by whose laws it continues to be governed, is perfectly benevolent.

These arguments for the Goodness of God coincide with what Dr. Paley has said on the same subject. He says the Goodness of God rests upon two propositions, each of which is capable of being made out by observations, which are drawn from the appearances of nature.

The first is that in a vast plurality of instances in which contrivance is per-

ceived, the design of the contrivance is beneficial.

The second, that the Deity has superadded pleasure to animal sensations beyond what was necessary for any other purpose, or when the purpose, so far as it was necessary, might have been effected by the operation of pain. These propositions he has illustrated by a variety of facts which are deserving our attention. But complete satisfaction on this most important of all subjects is derived from the Scriptures. They every where assert the Goodness of God. They expressly inform us that "He is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works." And in this short sentence has the Apostle John expressed every thing that the heart of man can desire. "God is Love." By following this truth into all its consequences, of which we are too much afraid, we shall derive not only comfort and consolation, but satisfaction and happiness in every scene of our existence.

And the gift of Jesus Christ, by which the connection between this and a future and eternal state is established, solves every difficulty, and completely "vindicates the ways of God to man." The duties owing to God from this view of his character, will hereafter be more particularly considered. Suffice it, at present, to make this general application of the subject.

Firmly persuaded of the perfect goodness of God, let us love Him with all our heart, soul, and strength; cheerfully obey all his commandments; resign ourselves and all our concerns to the care of his Providence, and ascribe unto Him, all honour and glory, dominion and power both now and for ever.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

THE importance of forming right sentiments of the Perfections, Providence and Government of God has, in these Lectures, been frequently insisted upon. With a view to check our inquiries into this most interesting subject, it has, I know, been asserted by some, that the Divine perfections are what the human mind cannot understand, as being not only *superior in degree*, but also *different in kind*, from what is considered as excellent and amiable among *men*. Convinced I am that the cause of Religion has sustained no inconsiderable injury from such representation. It is true, on account of our weakness and inability to take in the *whole* of the Divine Administration, we cannot always reconcile

particular events with those perfections which the general laws of nature as well as the declarations of Scripture and the account there given of the dealings of God to mankind teach us to ascribe to the Supreme Being. We are still, however, able to conceive of *Power*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* into which *all excellence*, which can only be *natural*, *intellectual*, and *moral*, may be ultimately resolved. If we have no conception of these qualities; or if they are not the same in *God* as in man, to what purpose is it to be informed that the Being we worship possesses them in the highest degree? It is only telling us, in other words, that He is the *infinite unknown*. And in this case, instead of delighting in the contemplation of his character, loving Him for his excellencies, and celebrating the praises of his Name, *perfect silence* would be the most proper devotion. But besides being *informed* in Scripture of the character of God, we are exhorted to *follow on* to know Him;

to endeavour to be better acquainted with his will and the conduct of his providence, and particularly to make his perfections the object of our constant imitation. Exhortations of this kind are evidently founded on the supposition that we are able to form *clear*, if not *full* and *adequate* ideas of the Sovereign Parent of the universe, and the only proper object of religious adoration. If this then is the case, it certainly becomes us to exercise all imaginable care to cultivate right and worthy sentiments of the Divine Perfections and Character. An error *here* must be productive of the most fatal consequences, as it will not only affect the *other articles* of our belief, but our *peace of mind*, our delight in contemplating the character of God and the whole of our religious temper and practice. On the other hand, if we entertain right conceptions of the Divine Perfections, we have a *light* which will conduct us to all necessary truth; enable us to understand the ways and dealings

of God; what He requires of us and what we may expect from Him, and afford us that peace and satisfaction in our own minds which no other knowledge can possibly administer. Much indeed it is to be lamented, that mankind should have fallen into so many mistakes on this subject. I will not say in what light the infinitely perfect and adorable Jehovah has been represented by his creatures. The thought of what kind of *conduct* has been ascribed to him, while in *words* his excellencies have been acknowledged, is shocking to every mind concerned for the honour of his administration and the happiness of his creatures. But of all his attributes, there is no one which has been so much misunderstood and so grossly misrepresented as his *Justice.* A mode of treatment of his creatures has been represented as adopted by Him agreeably to the demands of Justice, which if it were ever practised by human beings towards one another, the epithets capricious, revenge-

ful, cruel, and unjust, would be thought too mild to express its malignity.

That our idea of the Justice of *God* may be clear and accurate, it may not be amiss to begin our inquiry with considering what is meant by Justice among *men*. Now, Justice in man consists, in few words, in "rendering unto all their dues." Mere *goodness* consists in conferring happiness upon beings who have done nothing either to merit or to forfeit it; and *mercy* is goodness exercised towards those who have offended and lost their right to it. But, Justice, as before observed, consists in "rendering unto all their dues;" it requires a person to preserve inviolate the rights of others; to render a suitable recompence for services; to fulfil contracts, and to make restitution for wrongs. And as we have all natural and acquired rights independent on one another, Justice, no doubt, is a capital virtue among men. But it is evident, that in this sense of

the word, there is no room for the exercise of Justice toward us in God. Every thing which we possess we have received from Him. Life, liberty, and property, every thing which we call our own, is his free and unmerited gift, continued to us by his supporting hand, and absolutely at his disposal. It does not appear, then, at all reasonable that we should charge Him with injustice, if He should take away that which He has given: on the contrary, we should be ready to submit to his will, and to say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

But although we have nothing but what we have received from God, and what depends upon his pleasure; yet *He may give us rights* which we hold from Him, and for which we are accountable to Him alone. And this He has done with respect to our life, with respect to the use of what we have justly

acquired, with respect to our liberty as far as is consistent with the good order of society and the end of civil government, and particularly with respect to conscience in matters of Religion. Nay, I hope we may, without being guilty of irreverence assert, that when *He promises us future good* upon condition of a sincere endeavour to obey his laws, if we comply with this condition, *we have a right* to that happiness which He has so graciously promised. It matters not whether *our services are proportioned* to the reward, nor whether *we* are *worthy* of the blessings which He has promised or not; for if He has thought fit to make certain promises, and to propose certain rewards, on *our compliance with certain conditions*, something *more than goodness* seems concerned, that the promises should be fulfilled and the rewards conferred. To assert that we have no right when God Himself has given us a right, is to *dispute* his authority; and the Writers of the New Tes-

tament scruple not to speak of faithful Christians as "having a right to the Tree of Life." This right is indeed founded solely on the Goodness or free Grace of God, and not in the least on the *merit* of our obedience. But what it was *goodness* or *free grace* to promise upon certain conditions, it is *justice* to bestow, when these conditions are complied with. *Fidelity* in his promises, therefore, appears to be an essential part of the Divine Justice.

But this is by no means the whole of this great and adorable perfection; nor shall we be much further assisted in our inquiries, by recollecting what is justice in men; because men are very much upon an *equality*, and have rights independent on one another; but infinite is the distance between God and us, and we have nothing but what we have received from Him, and which is not His free and unmerited gift. The justice of God then, must always be considered as belonging

to Him, under the character of a *Ruler*, a *Sovereign*, and a *Judge*. It is that which we mean when we term Him *the moral Governor of the world*. Now justice in the governor of any smaller or larger society, consists in allotting rewards or punishments to every man, suitably to his behaviour to that particular society, or to those Laws which he is bound to obey as a member of such a community. The end of all *human* governments, is the security of every individual in the enjoyment of his natural rights and privileges; and the justice of a human governor consists, in enacting, and properly executing such Laws as are calculated to answer this purpose, or in adjusting rewards and punishments, in such a manner as to promote the general felicity. The end of the *Divine* government, is the highest happiness of rational and moral beings. The Laws of the Divine government, are the Laws of righteousness, because the highest happiness of rational and moral beings consists in

righteousness or moral perfection. The justice of God then consists in distributing rewards and punishments, in such a manner as to bring about the greatest sum of moral perfection and happiness. It is, in other words, goodness towards moral agents, regulated by wisdom; goodness exercised in the capacity of a judge.

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This seems to be a plain and true account of the *principle;* and we must remember that in the *exercise* of it, are included *Equity and Impartiality: Equity* implying that God will make a proper distinction between the righteous and the wicked, rewarding the former in proportion to the degrees of their righteousness, and punishing the latter in proportion to the degrees of their wickedness; and *Impartiality*, implying that He is no respecter of persons, but that He will judge every man by the light with which he was favoured, and require no more than He has given; — that He will not reward any one for the virtue, nor pu-

nish any one for the faults of another; but, as it is expressed in Scripture, "render unto every man according to his works."

This is the best account which I am able to give you of the *Justice* of God; and let it never be forgotten, that it does not imply in it *Rigour* or *Revenge*, or any passion which can render the Deity the object of our servile fear and dread, but that it is founded on his wisdom and goodness, is perfectly consistent with his *Mercy*, and represents Him in an *endearing*, and not in a *forbidding* light. That this account is agreeable both to Reason and Scripture, and that from these sources we infer, that God is thus just and righteous, I shall now endeavour to show you.

There can then, it is obvious, in the first place, be no temptation to injustice, but from dependence or want, or from motives of benefiting ourselves at the expence of others. God therefore being supremely exalted above all principalities

and powers; the fountain of all being; the Lord of the whole Creation, and possessing in Himself an infinite and independent fullness of all possible blessedness, cannot be conceived to be under any temptation to do an unjust or unrighteous thing. Again, as all men are equally his offspring, we may with reason conclude, that all men are equally the object of his parental regard. And as we cannot suppose that He could have any other motive in creating any being, than to make that being happy, we have the same reason to believe, that He cannot take any pleasure in the misery of his creatures, nor suffer any one to labour under calamities, unless it be his own fault, or the means of improving his virtue, and qualifying him for greater felicity hereafter. Further, as the infinitely pure and holy mind must delight in and approve of purity and holiness in his creatures, and consequently hate and disapprove of the opposite qualities, we may safely conclude, that He will make

a proper distinction between the righteous and the wicked, reward the former according to the degree of his righteousness, and punish the latter according to the degree of his wickedness. And finally, agreeably to the definition of justice, this is no more than the operation of his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, in the most important Relation in which He stands to his creatures, of their Ruler and Judge.

These are the sentiments of Reason upon this subject, and in perfect harmony with these, are the plain declarations of the revealed Will of God, which are recorded in the Scriptures. "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth," says the Patriarch Abraham, "do right?" "Far be it from God," it is said in the book of Job, "that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall He render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely, God will not do

wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." "Justice and Judgment," says the Psalmist, "are the habitation of thy throne, Mercy and Truth shall go before thy face." Further, the idea which I have endeavoured to convey, of the impartiality of the Divine Justice, is uniformly handed down to us, by the sacred penmen. "He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor." "Of a truth, I perceive," says Peter, "that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him." Again, that the Justice of God implies, that He will perform his promise to those who serve Him, is likewise expressly asserted in the Scriptures. "All the promises of God in Him, are yea and Amen unto the glory of God." "The Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God."

Many more testimonies from the sacred writings, might easily be adduced. At

present, we see, that the scriptural account of the justice of God, does not, any more than the deductions of reason, represent Him in a forbidding, but in the most endearing and amiable light. If we search the Scriptures from beginning to end, we shall not meet with a single passage which informs us, that for every, the least, and even unavoidable error, we are liable to eternal damnation; that we derive from our first progenitor, which is the same as from God, a nature, in consequence of which, we are as incapable of doing any thing to please Him, as those that are naturally dead; that however sincere our hearts may be, we are exposed to his wrath, if we do not believe certain strange and unintelligible doctrines, which however we cannot believe, until He has inspired this principle of faith into us; that in *his* eyes there is not the least difference in human characters and actions; that His Law requires absolute Perfection from beings by nature imperfect, and cannot be dispensed with,

without a full and adequate satisfaction, which, when made however, none can experience the benefit of, but those who were elected by an unconditional decree before the foundation of the world — I say if we take the Scriptures for our guide, we shall not find a single passage which contains these and numberless other such doctrines, which are too commonly received, and which I would not have mentioned, if I were not fully convinced that they militate against the justice of God, have a tendency to do, what neither pain, trouble, persecution, nor any natural evil *can* do — that is, to make bad men happy, and good men miserable; to undermine the foundations of moral virtue, and do an irreparable injury to the cause of Christianity. In the Scriptures, we are told that "God knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust;" that "like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" and, that "if the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness which

he has committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, He will abundantly pardon." And we ought ever to remember, that the whole Christian scheme of Salvation, and all the benefits we receive through Christ, through the mediation of Christ, or by means of Christ, are all represented as the effects of the infinite goodness and mercy of *God*, who planned the whole as best calculated to bring about the recovery of mankind; commissioned Jesus Christ to execute it, and has rewarded him for his obedience. This confirms what we are repeatedly told, that "God delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live," which could not be the case, if the *Justice* of God were at all repugnant to His mercy. "He is slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." These things the Scriptures assert *plainly* and *intelligibly*, and if there be any texts which, upon a slight view, may seem to some to favour *other* sentiments, it would be an argument of

the humility and modesty of such persons, to suppose that they have misunderstood them; and instead of making Scripture inconsistent with itself, look out for an interpretation of these difficult texts, which will reconcile them to those passages which are perfectly clear and obvious. Happy is it for us that we have the sacred Scriptures to refer to, and are not obliged to receive as the word of God, the doctrines and opinions of fallible men. Happy is it for us, that "we are not to be judged by Man's judgment, but He who judgeth us is the Lord." "He will judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity." When this grand and discriminating day shall arrive, and the whole race of mankind shall be convened before His tribunal; "Salvation, and Glory, and Honour, and Power, shall be ascribed unto the Lord our God, for his true and righteous judgments;" and then it will appear, that He inflicteth judgment upon the wicked, not because his Justice cannot pardon, but

because goodness requires that vice, which is the source of all deformity and misery in the universe, be destroyed by natural evil. Then shall "those who have sinned without law, perish without law," and while some "shall be beaten with many, others shall be beaten with few stripes." Then likewise will "those who have sown sparingly, reap sparingly, and those that have sown bountifully, reap bountifully." While *all* the pious and good, shall be exempted from labour, sorrow and trouble, the joys of some will transcendently exceed those of others; they that have been wise, shall shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father; and they that have turned many to righteousness, and (let it be remembered) been righteous themselves, as the stars in the firmament, for ever and for ever.

LECTURE XXXIX.

RELIGION may, with great propriety and with singular advantage, be considered as resulting from the *relations* which subsist between God and man: and as such, it must necessarily depend upon, and be governed by, the natures and characters of both these Beings. He that has formed just sentiments of the Divine and human nature, of the absolute perfection of the one, and of the just bounds and limits of the other, will be prepared to form a right judgment of every doctrine, opinion, and practice, relating to Religion. Whatever doctrine is plainly inconsistent with the Nature or Perfections of God, or with the nature of man considered as his rational offspring, cannot be a doctrine which

has a sufficient foundation in reason or Scripture. If these two standards or tests of religious truth were uniformly regarded, they would, I apprehend, more than any thing else, prevent the progress of superstition and enthusiasm, and lead men to think accurately on those subjects in which they are most deeply interested, but which they have generally misunderstood either through inattention or prejudice.

In the ensuing Lecture, I shall lay before you some observations on an attribute of the Divine Nature, which is not so often attended to as it ought to be, but which cannot be meditated upon without the greatest advantage. I shall direct your attention to the *Blessedness*, *Happiness*, or *Self-sufficiency of God*.

This is a subject which admits of a clear and satisfactory proof. As this perfection is essential to the Nature of God, so it is a fundamental principle in

Religion, from which many other important principles take their rise, and with which all must be consistent. The importance of right sentiments concerning it will be evident from the further prosecution of the subject.

God is styled in Scripture the *blessed* God. Now, blessedness, when ascribed to Him, has a *peculiar* and *appropriate* sense, and is to be understood *emphatically* and *absolutely*. The blessedness of the great God is the *perfection* or *highest degree* of that state. The holy angels are blessed. Sincere Christians shall be so. Good men are said to be blessed on several accounts, particularly on account of the pardon of their sins, and their being in a state of favour and acceptance with God. But the blessedness of good men *here* is far short of that which they will arrive at *in heaven*; and that of the future and heavenly state admits of degrees, and will be perpetually increasing. But the Blessedness, or the

Happiness of *God* is always equal, permanent and perfect, incapable of addition, and liable to no diminution. In short, an essential difference between the happiness of *God* and of all other beings is this; that of other beings, even the highest orders of celestial spirits, is not only comparatively imperfect in its nature, but *derived*, and consequently dependent; but the happiness of the *God and Father* of all is, not only *perfect* in its nature, but *underived*, and *independent*. To all *other* beings happiness is a *gift*; in *God* it is an *inherent* and *essential* power or quality. With respect to all derived and created beings, every faculty and object of enjoyment, consequently every degree of happiness which they experience, is the effect of God's Goodness, and constantly depends upon its Cause. But with respect to God's own happiness, that has no Cause out of Himself; it is his peculiar prerogative; it necessarily follows from his possessing all natural, intellectual and moral ex-

cellence and perfection. In God there is no imperfection, no weakness, no want; nothing which can be the cause of unhappiness; and any change in his nature, if possible, would be for the worse. The Blessedness of God, therefore, is not so properly a primary attribute of his Nature, as the result of *all* his attributes. It seems, both in kind and degree, to flow from every particular attribute; and from the whole taken together to be supreme and perfect in kind, and infinite and absolute in degree. Let us consider its connection with absolute power, perfect wisdom, and infinite goodness.

In the first place, the Divine Being is possessed of absolute *Power*, which is one foundation of his Happiness. That being can never enjoy a perfect and independent happiness whose power is limited, and subject to check or controul. This very circumstance supposes the existence of a superior, or at least of

of an equal degree of power elsewhere. And wherever that superior or equal degree of power is lodged, there, there is a cause of interruption of happiness. Whatever being can controul our power, can, if it pleases, deprive us of happiness: and by consequence, in such circumstances, happiness is dependent and precarious. But *absolute power* is the foundation and support of an *absolute and independent happiness.* And this, *God*, and *God alone* enjoys. He is the One omnipotent and necessarily existing Spirit; the Author of Nature. All things proceed from Him; all Power is derived from Him; and as the *cause* must be superior to the *effect*, the Power of God is greater than that of all other beings in the universe. As all the Perfections of God are infinite, so his Power must be absolute Omnipotence, subject to no controul, and adequate to every possible effect.

Secondly, infinite *Wisdom* is another necessary foundation of perfect and ab-

solute happiness. Almighty Power, without wisdom to direct its operation, if such a thing were possible, would be a great evil even to its own Possessor. Were that wisdom imperfect, or in any case liable to error, that power might be misemployed; consequently the happiness of an intelligent being which depends upon right action, might in that case be interrupted or totally prevented: that is, it would be uncertain and precarious. Nothing but unerring wisdom is fit to direct and regulate uncontroulable power. Without wisdom to guide it, and goodness to point out its object, power is not a desirable acquisition. Like a sharp instrument in the hand of an unskilful person, instead of answering any good end, it would only serve to wound the unpractised hand of him that used it. But God is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." He possesses infinite wisdom. He made all things. He is perfectly acquainted with the works of his own hand. His know-

ledge comprehends the nature of all things, with all their qualities, circumstances, relations and dependencies. Unerring wisdom is the natural effect of infinite knowledge. To suppose that God who sees all things as they are in their own nature, the whole chain of causes and effects extending through infinity, should in any case make use of improper means to accomplish his purpose, is to suppose that He would act contrary to the perfection of his own Nature. "Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?" "God knoweth the way thereof, and He knoweth the path thereof." Let the expanded Heavens, with sun, moon, and all the starry hosts convince you of the infinite wisdom and skill of the Divine Architect. Turn your attentive eyes around you on this earth, and you will find in every object that salutes your sight, an incontestable proof of the Wisdom of its Author. The earth and the sea, mountains and all hills, ex-

tensive forests and flowery lawns, beasts and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowl, fruitful trees and all cedars, bespeak his Wisdom and proclaim his praise: and above all the constitution of *human* nature; for whether we consider the frame of our bodies, or the faculties of our minds, we have the most abundant reason to acknowledge that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made." "The Lord," agreeably to the sublime representation of the Sacred Writer, "by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens; by his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew. O Lord! how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all."

Another perfection equally necessary as a foundation of complete Happiness, with those already mentioned, is *Goodness*. Goodness, by some authors, is considered as the necessary effect of perfect Reason, Wisdom, or Intelligence; and it

is possible that this may be the case, as we cannot conceive of a being of perfect wisdom, without supposing that He will prefer happiness to misery; any more than we can conceive of Almighty Power, or a capacity of doing every thing, without infinite Wisdom as connected with it, and even constituting a part of it. Indeed Wisdom and Goodness are in the nature of things most closely connected, so that one cannot exist in any high degree without the other, and in human characters, a good head and a good heart are more frequently found united than many imagine. It is however more easy, and I think more accurate, to consider these perfections, notwithstanding their connexion, as *distinct* and *separate* qualities, than as proceeding one from the other, or as sustaining the relation of cause and effect. Though Almighty Power probably could not subsist without infinite wisdom; though infinite wisdom probably could not subsist without perfect benevolence, yet will

our ideas be most clear if we consider these as different species of excellence, and all other excellencies, as ultimately resolvable into them. With respect to *Goodness*, as all the perfections of God are infinite, if we prove that He possesses it in *any* degree, it follows that He must possess it an *infinite* degree: in a word that *Happiness* is the sole *end of his government*, and that *Benevolence*, or a design to promote this, is the spring of all his actions. If it be supposed that there is something erroneous in this statement, I would ask what *other* end can He possibly have in view? It *has been* said, it *can* only be said, *Rectitude* or *Moral Perfection*; and that wisdom chooses this end as the most worthy of a perfect Being. In this statement, I apprehend the whole difficulty is removed by observing that the means are here substituted for the end, or the cause for the effect. Every thing which has been said on the eternal reason and fitness of things, and on wisdom being the spring of action in the

Deity, and rectitude the same, is reconcilable upon this explanation. Moral perfection is the habit of mind from which happiness results, or the faculties and organs by which it is enjoyed, and this connexion is eternal and indissoluble. To those then who assert that rectitude, or moral perfection, is the end of the Divine Government, the question recurs, Has rectitude or moral perfection a tendency to promote happiness? The answer to this question entirely removes the difficulties which have been supposed to be connected with this subject, and leads us clearly to this plain and simple, but at the same time most glorious conclusion, that *Goodness is the spring of action in the Deity*; and *that consequently the happiness of his creatures, is the sole end which He had in view, in creating, preserving, and governing the Universe;* that *this principle is constantly directed by perfect reason or unerring wisdom, which chooses rectitude or moral perfection as the means of which happiness is the end,* or *the cause of which the other is the necessary effect.*

I wish to take every opportunity in my power of giving this representation of the Divine Perfections, as it appears to me to be the most easy, rational, consistent, and accurate view which we can possibly take. The *Goodness* of God, thus considered, is the most delightful theme that can employ the contemplation of men or angels: it is the source of the highest satisfaction and joy to the pious mind in all circumstances; it is the life and light of the whole creation; it is the spring of all our present enjoyment, the foundation of all our hopes as to futurity.

And that God *is thus good*, the united voice of reason and revelation loudly proclaims. The whole course of events; every law in the natural, animal, intellectual, and moral world; every power and faculty of rational beings, every instinct of brutes; every revolution in nature is evidently designed to promote happiness, and a striking illustration of the Benevolence of its Author. And though the *ways* of an infinite Being,

or his adaptation of *means* to *ends*, for infinity in number, duration, and extent, are to us finite creatures unsearchable, and his *works* past finding out; yet so far as we *can* see into the methods of the Divine proceedings, in his works of Nature, Providence, and Grace; so far as He has been pleased to lay open his counsels to us, we see the highest reason to admire and adore his Goodness; and the farther we are able to penetrate into the laws and constitution of nature, the more do we see of their benevolent design and tendency. Every kind and degree of enjoyment and happiness which are experienced by every percipient and rational being, in every part of every world, of every system of worlds which is scattered through the boundless Universe, is the effect of the Divine Bounty.

Thus God being infinitely, independently, and unchangeably powerful, wise, and good, He must be infinitely, independently, and unchangeably *happy*. There

is an absolute fullness in his nature. The unhappiness which men are exposed to, arises from, and is the consequence of an imperfect nature. It proceeds from ignorance, from want of power, or want of goodness. Remove the *cause*, and the effect will cease. In that venerable and adorable Being, in whom there is no defect natural, intellectual, or moral, there can be no want, no desire unaccomplished, no uneasiness, not the least degree of unhappiness. The possession and exercise of infinite power, unerring wisdom, and perfect Goodness, without interruption, and without end, must constitute a happiness, entire, absolute, and perfect.

The firm belief and habitual consideration of this truth, will prevent many erroneous opinions respecting the Divine administration, and will lay a foundation for consistency in religion, both in principle and in practice. It is not so necessary to point out the mode of its operation, as to fix the principle deeply

in our minds, and to leave it to its own exertion. Firmly persuaded that God is perfectly happy in Himself, we shall clearly understand the nature of Prayer, and of all religious addresses to Him, as well as of the death of Christ; the Law which He has given to direct our conduct, and the duties which He requires from us, which must be to promote *our* happiness and not His. Firmly persuaded that perfect felicity results from the possession of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness in the highest degree, we shall make use of all the means with which we are favoured, to acquire these in as high a degree as possible. The first indeed, *Power*, does not depend upon ourselves. *Wisdom* and *Goodness* are the only qualities which we should endeavour to obtain, trusting that God will, in some future period, bestow upon us that degree of *power* or *ability*, which will enable us to enjoy that happiness which our wisdom, and particularly our moral excellencies, qualify us to experience. From these last, from Wis-

dom, and particularly from Goodness, our felicity must proceed. At present our own imperfection, and the imperfection of others around us, prevent us from the enjoyment of any high degree of felicity. Let us then not expect it in this scene of intellectual and moral weakness, in this school of rational beings for immortality; but let us prepare ourselves for the enjoyment of it in a future and better state. Let us cultivate those intellectual and moral faculties, in which our happiness must finally consist; and let us look forward to that glorious period, when we shall be free from the difficulties which at present surround us — when we shall be free from those temptations which are now so great a trial of our virtue — when our minds will be no longer agitated by the folly or wickedness of those with whom we are connected; — when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face; — when our knowledge will no longer be partial and defective, but we shall know even as also we are known.

LECTURE XL.

THE comfort which arises from clear and rational views of the Divine Administration, depends not only upon the persuasion that things *have been* and *are at present*, under the direction of unerring wisdom and perfect goodness, but that they will *remain so in future*; or, in other words, that they will *continue* to be governed by the same laws, by which they are regulated *at present*. If we ask ourselves why we believe that the sun will rise *to-morrow*; why we expect that the food we eat will *continue* to nourish us, or that any of the Laws of Nature will *any longer* observe their wonted course; we find that we must resolve all into the *will of that Being*, at whose command Nature received her birth, by whom all the laws

of the material world were constituted, and on whose pleasure their existence and operation depend. The power, the wisdom, and the goodness of this Supreme all-directing Mind, are conspicuous in every part of his vast dominion. But besides the persuasion of the *present existence* of these perfections in the Governor of the universe, the human mind, which carries its views into futurity, is anxious to know something about their *continuance.* The *unchangeableness* of God, therefore, appears to be a doctrine of great importance, and deserving our particular attention, as affording the only security for the continuance of those blessings which we receive at his hands. In the following Lecture, I propose to illustrate this attribute of the Deity, to endeavour to reconcile some passages of Scripture on the subject, and to make a practical improvement of it.

In order to assist us in forming clear ideas of the immutability of God, it may

be of use to consider, in what respects *we* ourselves, and the objects around us are changeable.

Of the *essence* of all beings in the Universe, not excepting ourselves, we are entirely ignorant. They are only *attributes, properties, qualities,* and *effects* that come within the sphere of our cognizance. All therefore that we can mean by the *essence* of God being unchangeable, is that *His being is eternal,* or that He is *from everlasting to everlasting.* We ourselves, who were created by the power of another, and whose continuance in being, and enjoyments of every kind, depend upon the will of our Creator, are creatures of *yesterday,* and possessed of a *precarious* and *uncertain* existence. But *that glorious Being* who is *uncreated, underived* and independent, must be possessed of *unchangeableness of essence,* or, which is the same thing, be *incorruptible* and eternal. Again :

The *perfections* of God are unchangeable as his essence: or as it is expressed by the Apostle James, "He is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." This comparison is extremely beautiful and striking, drawn from the consideration of that which, in corporeal things, is the least subject to change, namely, the *sun* in the Heavens. The sun, in diffusing light, heat, and fertility, through the various worlds over which his influence extends, is the greatest, the most regular, the most uniform of those natural objects, which our minds can contemplate. Yet is his influence varied by the diurnal rotation of the earth on its axis, and its annual revolution in its orbit, with its similar polar direction, in consequence of which, the vicissitudes of day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest take place; and also by clouds and changes in our atmosphere, and by alterations within its own body. But *God* the Father of intellectual light, the

Author and Dispenser of every good and perfect gift, has in *Him* no change, no uncertainty, no alteration of any of his perfections, "no variableness nor shadow of turning." The Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God are invariable, because these perfections are independent. The powers of *our* minds and bodies, and the affections of our hearts, are inconstant and variable; they are subject to a decay which we cannot prevent, and they are directed in their exertions by fluctuating and uncertain circumstances. Our knowledge is perpetually increasing. Our views and schemes, our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears, are as unsteady and liable to vicissitude as the state of things around us. And although we should be *able* to discern what is best and *inclined* to do it, yet our *ability* is so circumscribed, our active powers are so dependent, that we cannot always perform what we wish. But it is not so with the independent Jehovah. His power is superior to all controul, and therefore immutable:

his knowledge extends to all events, past, present, and to come, and is therefore immutable: His goodness, the spring of all his conduct, being perfect and supported by Omniscience and Omnipotence, must be the foundation of a will, which no temptation can reach, and is therefore immutable. All the other Perfections of his nature proceed from those before-mentioned, and being only different branches and modifications of them, must likewise of necessity be immutable. Hence it clearly appears, from the light of reason, that unchangeableness is an attribute of the Deity. His *Essence* and *Perfections* are immutable; and all his *Laws* and *Dispensations*, flowing from these perfections, must bear the *same character*; that is, they must be immutably wise, just, and good.

From this attribute we deduce such general truths as the following: — that, whatever appearances in this infant state of rational existence, may lead us to sup-

pose the contrary, God *will* most certainly make a proper distinction between the good and the bad, and not, in the final issue of things, confound the innocent with the guilty — that in all cases virtue will meet with its reward, and vice with its punishment; that He will be faithful to his promises, equitable and impartial in his judgments, and that his ultimate design in forming the universe, to promote the moral perfection and happiness of his creatures, will be accomplished. The Scriptures abound in representations of this kind; and it is well worthy our observation, that they chiefly insist upon those views of the unchangeableness of God which are the most intelligible and most instructive; those which tend to fill the mind with reverence, and at the same time to inspire it, under the troubles of life, with consolation and joy. Thus the Psalmist, when reflecting on the instability of all worldly things, and even of the world itself, breaks forth into this joyful exclamation: "Thou Lord shalt endure

for ever, and the thoughts of thy heart to all generations. Of old hast Thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands; they shall perish; but Thou shalt endure; yea all of them shall wax old as doth a garment, as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed." The Scriptures, also, in the strongest manner, insist upon the unchangeableness of the *Divine Goodness.* The Great God is represented as thus expostulating with his people Israel. "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb, yea she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Upon this ground, the Holy Scriptures likewise teach us to place the utmost confidence in God. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" "Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord, who keepeth truth for ever."

There are however some passages in Scripture which seem at first view to *contradict* these sentiments of the Divine Being, but which it will not be found a difficult matter to reconcile with them, when the subject is properly explained. Thus, for instance, Moses observes that, "when God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, it repented the Lord that He had made man." And the Prophet Jeremiah thus addresses the people: "Amend your ways and your doings, and the Lord will repent of the evil that He has pronounced against you." With respect to these and many other similar passages of Scripture, it must be considered that the language is figurative, and that the Prophet speaks after the manner of men. The meaning in these places is, that *God acts as men do when they repent.* But a little consideration will convince us that the Divine conduct is steady and uniform, and that a different conduct would show fickleness or changeableness. We must always

make a distinction between the Perfections of God considered as *principles or dispositions in his Nature*, and the *exercise* of them in his dispensations towards his creatures. His *Nature* and *Character* continue the same, and his Laws as resulting from them. His *Conduct* toward mankind varies, not from any change in *Him*, but a change in *them*, which renders it necessary that they should be treated in a different manner. The Scriptures themselves have given us a clear solution of the difficulty. "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." It was "because God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of their hearts was evil continually, that He destroyed them from off the face of the earth." The design of creating the world was to promote the moral perfection, and consequently happiness of rational beings; and the *same design* which required the continuance of the human race while in a state of virtuous

improvement, required their destruction when in a state of incurable degeneracy, or when wicked past recovery. If we consider man as rational and accountable, and God as the moral governor of the world, all whose Laws are intended to promote righteousness, the difficulty must immediately vanish. Promises are made upon conditions of obedience; they are not fulfilled, because the conditions are not complied with; threatenings are denounced on condition of disobedience, repentance intervenes, and they are not executed. In these cases, God continues the same, and the laws continue the same, but the change takes place in mankind. Wisdom and goodness require that men should be treated differently in different circumstances. Thus what was brought as an objection against the immutability of God is, when properly considered, a proof and manifestation of it.

From contemplating this venerable Perfection of the Divine Being, let us

proceed to consider in what respects the imitation of it may be considered as a *human* virtue.

The intellectual and moral weakness of *man* renders it unbecoming him at present to lay claim to immutability. *Unchangeableness* of conduct ought to be the result of unerring wisdom and perfect goodness. But for the same reason that this is a *perfection in the Deity*, namely, because He cannot be deceived, and because what appears to Him right *to-day* must *always* appear so:—for that reason it is a perfection in man to act upon those principles which appear to him to be right, *whilst* they appear so, and to alter his conduct when he sees sufficient cause for such a change. It is the perfection of beings whose understandings are weak, whose knowledge is limited, and whose passions and prejudices are strong, to be open to conviction, ready to hear, slow to speak, and willing to retract their opinions and

alter their conduct, as soon as they are convinced of their impropriety. In short, the *unchangeableness of man* is well expressed by *consistency* and *steadiness* of conduct, and the utmost perfection we should look for in him is integrity. The person who resolves, at all times, to do what appears to him to be the will of God, will be preserved from falling into any dangerous errors; and if he cannot be considered as *absolutely* unchangeable, he will be *relatively* so; as his *conduct* will always be regulated by his *principles*, and his character will be distinguished by *uniformity, steadiness, consistency, and decision*, qualities which recommend those who possess them to the favour of God and the respect of man.

The consideration of the Unchangeableness of God shows the necessity of repentance for sin. Sin will naturally bring with it its own punishment. The sinner, as long as he exists under this character, cannot but be miserable. If

we consider the Divine Being as invariably governed by wisdom, justice and goodness, we must expect from Him and from his Laws and Dispensations that, in all cases, and in proportion to their degree, virtue will be rewarded and vice punished. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." If we have by our vices incurred his displeasure, in order to avoid the effects of it we must alter our conduct. God cannot change, but the sinner must, or perish.

To conclude:

The consideration of the Unchangeableness of God is a source of consolation to good men under all the varying circumstances of this short and changing life. *Human* friendship is precarious and sometimes dissolved from the most capricious motives. But those who enjoy the friendship of God, unless their tempers change, will enjoy it *for ever*. He will never leave, never forsake those who

trust in Him. His parental regard towards the children of men is unalterable. His affection for them cannot abate, but will continue in proportion to their obedience. Our best friends may *mistake* our interest, and give us improper advice, but God knows what is best for us in all possible circumstances; and if any lack wisdom, He will give it liberally and without upbraiding. Our best friends may fail in *power* if not in *judgment* and *inclination*; but God is abundantly *able* to do for us whatever his Wisdom sees conducive to our real happiness. And though virtue may at present suffer adversity, we may rest assured that in the world above, it will be amply recompensed. The time is fast approaching, when our dearest friends must be separated from us, or we from them. But wherever we are, whether in life, or the unconscious tenants of the grave, God is present with us. And joyful is the thought that He is not only the steady friend and patron of

virtue in this life, but He will manifest Himself to be such throughout *eternal ages*. All things here below are variable. Our lives, circumstances, and connexions are perpetually changing. Every year produces great alterations both in ourselves, and in the state of things around us. Nay, we know not what a day may bring forth. Soon the present scene will close, and eternal things will open upon us. But amidst this round of transitory existence, there is a Being whom none of the accidents of time can affect, but whose essence and whose perfections are immutable. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Under the shadow of his wings, we may safely repose. Secure of his favour and friendship, let us preserve our souls in patience amidst all the trials and vicissitudes of the present life. Though these heavens and this earth shall pass away, there is a new heaven and a new earth, prepared by Him who disposeth of all events, for the reception of his faithful servants, where

their virtue shall be fully rewarded, and where they shall be made completely happy in the firm assurance of being *for ever* the objects of his Love.

LECTURE XLI.

Love to God, on which we are now going to treat, is the first principle of religion; it is the most comprehensive of all duties, and indeed the source of every thing that is amiable and excellent in the temper and character of a reasonable and moral being.

This world in which we are placed, with all its sources of enjoyment, passeth away. Our animal passions will soon be extinguished, and the objects of these passions will be no more. How powerfully soever, the honours, the riches, or the pleasures of life may affect us for awhile, he who has *no other* possessions, whose heart is fixed upon no other objects, will soon be deprived of all he held

dear, and left forlorn and destitute. But he whose affections are fixed on *God*— who loves Him sincerely, and wishes for the enjoyment of his favour, as his supreme felicity, must be happy in every state and condition of being; and that principle of love, of which he is *now* possessed, we may reasonably suppose will be increased and strengthened *after* his removal by death; and constitute his felicity in that happier state to which he will be removed, *for ever*. Love to God then, being so essential a part of a religious character, and being in Scripture represented, as "the first and great commandment of the law," in the present and a following lecture, I propose to consider the *nature and foundation of it*; the *circumstances which are necessary to render it acceptable*; and *what are the genuine and most proper expressions of it*.

The Love of God is an affection which has for its object the *moral perfections* of God, as exercised in every part of the Creation around us, and to ourselves in

particular. Perhaps it will be most easily illustrated, by considering the high regard we have for *some of our fellow creatures*, in preference to others. And what is the *reason* of this preference? Is it because they are richer or more powerful? Or rather, is it not because they appear to be *wiser* and *better?* Their *Wisdom* then and superior *Goodness* are the objects of our distinguished respect, or the ground and reason of our esteem and love. Now, if we apply these reflections upon *human* characters to the *Deity*, we shall find, what it is which renders the Divine character amiable in our eyes; it is the Divine *Excellence and Perfection.* The veneration which we pay to wise and good men, on account of their wisdom and goodness, is of the same kind with our love to God; the same in *kind*, but not in *degree;* for our love to *Men* ought to be proportioned to the imperfect degrees of *human* goodness; but our love to *God* should be the *highest* possible, having for its object the *greatest* perfection and the greatest kindness to *us*, and ought

only to be bounded by the necessary imperfection of human nature. If our regard for the Divine Being have any other object than the Divine *Goodness;* and especially, if that object be inconsistent with goodness, it may proceed from superstition, enthusiasm, or hypocrisy, but it cannot be the *Love of God.* Superstition is the excess of Divine *Fear*, as on the contrary enthusiasm is the excess of Divine *Love.* Enthusiasm is an affected familiarity with God; it is a state of extacy or rapture, proceeding from an opinion of the peculiar favour and friendship of God, without any thing answering to such high pretensions in the temper or conduct. And I would be more express and particular here, because the love of God has been, with some, a mere enthusiastical ardour of affection; the workings of the animal frame; a mere fancy floating in the *head*, without descending to any good purpose upon the *heart*, or having any apparent effect, at least any good effect, upon the general course of a

man's *life*. Whereas, on the contrary, the *Love* of God is a calm, steady, rational affection, of which the attributes of the Deity are the object. Divine Wisdom, and particularly Divine *Goodness*, are amiable in the *idea*, even in the abstract imagination; but that which makes these perfections most truly and substantially, most really and constantly the object of our love, is the application of them to *ourselves*: that is, when we consider God as *actually governing* the world, and exercising a gracious Providence over *us* in particular.

In pointing out *those circumstances which are necessary to render the Love of God acceptable*, or the *true characters* of the Love of God, our attention is necessarily directed to the first command of both the Jewish and the Christian Revelation, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

The first quality then in the Love of God is *Sincerity.* The heart should dictate what the lips utter in all our acts of devotion. Our *Reason* should not only be engaged in the worship of God, but also our *Feelings* and *Affections;* our adorations should be not only the dictates of the *understanding,* but also the effusions of a *heart* glowing with religious gratitude. Words, in themselves, are only unmeaning sounds, and no farther of service than as they express the *inward feelings* of the mind. When abused to the expression of contrary feelings, they constitute the worst species of hypocrisy and falsehood. We must offer up the incense of a *sincere* heart to God, the searcher of hearts; we must worship "Him who is a Spirit, in Spirit and in Truth."

Again, our Love of God must be *entire,* that is, *sole* and *undivided.* We are told by our Saviour, that "no man can serve two masters," that is, two masters of opposite characters, and who require a di-

rectly opposite course of conduct. We are "to love neither the world, nor the things of the world," for this passion is inconsistent with the Love of God. Not that Religion cancels any of the ties of nature, or renders void our obligation to mutual acts of kindness. It does not teach us, that if we would love God *supremely*, we must cease to perform the duties incumbent upon us as *social* and *connected* beings: on the contrary, we are taught to consider this sacred affection, as the spring of every social duty, and are given to understand, that God will consider our love to our brethren of mankind, as the best criterion of our love to Him. The conduct therefore, of those persons cannot be justified, however good their intentions may be, who, led away by an enthusiastic regard for the Deity, bid adieu to the world, the scene of action in which He has placed them, and in retirement and solitude give way to the extravagant flights of a heated imagination. All that is required of us, by loving God

with our whole heart, is, that when any thing comes in competition with our duty; when pleasure, riches, even domestic peace, popularity, or apprehended usefulness, or any other temptation, prompt us to any thing which is contrary to the express will of God, we must resist the temptation, discharge the duty, and leave consequences to Him.

But further, our Love of God must be *constant*. There are certain seasons, when the heart is peculiarly susceptible of religious impressions; when, warmed and expanded by some external blessing, it feels a kind regard for almost every object around it. On these and the like occasions, we find ourselves peculiarly disposed for the exercises of devotion. But when the cause which inspired this unusual fervour into the heart is removed, its wonted coldness and indifference too often return. In vain then do the numberless blessings around us solicit our attention, and call for our affection, when

our affection and devout regard, alas! depend more upon the temperature of the blood than upon the calm dictates of the understanding. Such love as this can never be acceptable to God, since that alone is solid and genuine, which is constant and unchangeable.

I beg leave to add, that our Love of God, in order to be acceptable, should be *cheerful.* It is not uncommon to see persons who profess, and who perhaps have a sincere regard for the Deity, assuming a peculiar severity of manners, and an affected solemnity of deportment. But surely there is nothing in devotion which should lead us to assume such an appearance. Love is a cheerful passion. The contemplation of supreme perfection, employed in the government of the universe, is the most elevating of all sentiments. As Christians, we ought to consider God as the God of Love, and as such we should ever approach Him with cheerfulness and delight. Indeed, every one who

knows from experience what true devotion means, will acknowledge, that such sensations are the most delightful which he ever experienced.

To conclude this Lecture — for the subject must be resumed — Is God infinitely good; and are we the particular objects of his Care and Goodness? surely then devotion must be a natural, a reasonable, a profitable, and a delightful employment. To serve, please, and love an *arbitrary* being, may be difficult; but to serve, love, and obey a Being of all *possible perfection*, must be grateful to every feeling and elevated mind. We cannot but experience the highest delight in the contemplation and worship of such a Being. As the best method to keep the flame of devotion alive in our breasts, and to engage us to love and adore the Most High, and to reconcile ourselves to his government, and to all his dispensations, let us represent Him to our minds in the most amiable light; let us always think and speak of him in the

most honourable manner; and let us admit no doctrine as a part of the Christian system, which is inconsistent with his Perfections, and particularly his Goodness.

With these rational, cheering, and ennobling prospects, and with all correspondent affections towards the Author of our various mercies, we may pass through all the changes of this turbulent state in tranquillity and peace. And when we are summoned to leave this world, (as we shortly shall be,) in full confidence that the favour and friendship of our Father and our God will accompany us to whatever unknown region we may be removed, "our flesh also may rest in hope."

LECTURE XLII.

HAVING in a former Lecture considered the nature and foundation of love to God, and the circumstances which are necessary to render it acceptable, or the true characters of this sublime affection, I now proceed, according to my proposed plan, to show *what are the genuine and most proper expressions of it.* And here I observe, that the true principle of love to God will naturally lead us to *imitate* those moral perfections which are the chief objects of our esteem. That this is the case, we may easily learn from what is observable in *human* characters and friendships. Where we have formed an intimacy with a person remarkable for wisdom, virtue, and piety, and who is upon this account the object

of our particular regard, we immediately desire to *resemble* him in these amiable qualities. As often as we observe his rational and manly piety, the friendliness and benevolence of his heart, and the purity and simplicity of his manners, the natural workings of the human soul toward such a friend is to wish to be *like* him; and love, frequent converse, and desire, will naturally and insensibly lead us to *imitation.* The most probable, easy and effectual method of becoming good, is to *love* good beings, and to associate much with them. There is something *insinuating* and happily *contagious* in good examples; so that if a man have them frequently in his *view* or in his *thoughts*, he can hardly avoid being himself good from the very *imitative* principle which is within him.

Now, we shall be conscious of the same sentiment, if we are possessed of a true love to God. As often as we reflect upon his supreme Goodness, we admire

it; our souls are ready to burst forth into strains of devotion at thought of it; and the consequence of this is, an earnest desire and endeavour to be *ourselves* adorned with an inferior degree of the same goodness. And this, at first view, is obvious. We profess to love God. And what do we love in Him? Not the *name* or the *sound*, but the *character* of God. And why do we love the *Character* of God? What is the reason, foundation, or object of our affection? We love Him because He is the *wisest* and *best* of all beings. The truth then is, that in loving *God*, we love *wisdom* and *goodness*. Can we then love wisdom and goodness, without wishing and endeavouring to be wise and good? Such a regard as has no influence upon the practice, is rather *lukewarmness* and *dissimulation* than *love*. By this test, then, we may easily judge of the reality and acceptableness of our piety. We can scarcely be deceived here unless wilfully. If we love God, as we ought to do, we

shall imitate Him; we shall "be holy, as He is holy; merciful, as He is merciful; and perfect, as He is perfect." Away then with all pretences to Religion, while the heart and life are not impressed and governed by religious principles. If we do not desire and endeavour to be like God in righteousness and goodness, we love not God, nor righteousness and goodness. If we love God, we love Him because He is *excellent;* and if we love the Excellencies of the *Deity*, we shall love every thing else that is truly *excellent*, and strive to cultivate in ourselves the amiable qualities which we so much admire. We shall strive to obtain them, not with *lifeless, ineffectual wishes*, but with that *fervency* of *spirit* and *energy* of *endeavour*, which the human soul is found to exert when it is ambitious of perfection; when it pants after immortality. This is the first operation of *love* to God; it inspires us with ardent wishes and vigorous desires to be *like* Him.

. The love of God, if it be *genuine*, will be attended with an earnest desire *to obtain his favour*. This is what constantly happens in *human* characters. It is impossible to love persons sincerely, without a desire to please them, and to secure their approbation. This is the very nature of love; it is the life and essence of friendship. The *child* who loves his *parent*, will endeavour, by all laudable methods, to please him; and he dreads nothing in this world so much as his displeasure. The faithful *servant*, who bears a kind affection for his *master*; and the *subject*, who really loves his *prince*, will endeavour, by all the influence of obedient and loyal conduct, to secure the esteem and favour of their superiors. And thus it is with men in all connexions. Now, God whom we profess to love, stands in the most interesting *relations* to us. He is our common Parent, our Guardian, our Benefactor, our Law-giver and our Judge; and He has an absolute disposal both of *us* and of all that belongs

to us. If, then, we believe that we are constantly in the presence of *such a Being*, and that to Him our whole hearts lie open; if we reverence his wisdom, and feel a proper sense of gratitude for his goodness, it will be our chief desire and endeavour to obtain his approbation. Our principal attention and regard will be directed towards Him; his friendship will be our highest concern; and in every action our grand inquiry will be whether it is likely to please or to offend the greatest, the wisest and the best of Beings, on whom our all depends. This temper and conduct invariably attend a genuine principle of love to God, prevailing in the heart.

Another evidence of our love to God is a stated endeavour *to acquaint ourselves with Him.*

This we are to do by contemplating the *Perfections and Providence of God*, and by a disposition to maintain a *regular communion with Him.* This is

the case with respect to *those excellent persons on earth* for whom we entertain a particular affection; we delight to associate with them, and to open, as it were, our whole souls before them. Those whose happiness it is to have their minds attuned to the harmony of friendship, and are blessed with such a friend, have often experienced the truth of what I am saying; and if such a friend happen to be *absent*, how natural is it to sit down to contemplate his singular excellencies, and to recollect his peculiar transactions! Something of this nature is enjoyed by those happy souls who are influenced by the divine principle of love to God. They delight to converse with Him, and are most happy, when pouring out their hearts in acts of devotion before Him. How often do they retire from the toilsome business of the world, to collect their scattered spirits, to hold converse with their Maker, and to dwell in their thoughts on unclouded perfection! In these happy moments of

seclusion from too anxious cares and scenes of vanity, with what unspeakable delight will they survey the works and ways of their heavenly Father, a theme full of joy to the pious contemplative mind! And then, with what inexpressible pleasure will they carry their views forwards to futurity, and in distant prospect survey those scenes of perfection and happiness which the Gospel of Christ assures us are prepared for the friends of God! Immortal glory opens to their view: Heaven itself is, as it were, unveiled before them; and by a lively faith they anticipate and realise those invisible glories which are to be revealed hereafter. The men whose heads and hearts are immersed in sensible things, are strangers to entertainments of this kind, and may perhaps suspect us of *enthusiasm;* but if it be enthusiasm, it is of a *sublime* and *generous* nature; it is the noblest intellectual exertion of the noblest minds; it is a thought which fills the soul, elevates it above the world, and

is the most powerful incentive to every virtue.

Another mark of this divine principle, is a *cheerful resignation* to the wise and righteous Providence of God in all his dispensations. It must be acknowledged, that apparently unfortunate events, are often permitted to attend even the best of men in this world, which it is sometimes difficult, for the infirmity of human nature, to sustain. In this view, it is, that "the judgments of God are a great deep." It is our present condition, to "know but in part," and to see but one link of a chain which extends to infinity. But we have abundant evidence that a wise and good Providence is at the head of affairs, and that even those calamitous events which are permitted to take place here, are most wise and necessary parts of that great plan of operations by which God governs the world. The pious mind admits the full force of this sentiment, is assured that all is well ma-

naged, and firmly persuaded that *the seemingly partial evils* here below, are *real, universal good.* He therefore silences every murmuring thought, restrains every uneasy sentiment, loses *his* will in the Divine counsels, and with humble, pious cheerfulness, supports himself with the rejoicing thought, that all is wise, righteous, and good. And why not submit, when infinite Benevolence chooses, infinite Wisdom directs, and infinite Power brings to pass whatever happens? When we consider that the greatest, the wisest, and the best of Beings, orders the whole series of events, how absolute should our submission, how entire should our confidence be! This is no more than a becoming loyalty of heart to the Governor of the universe; it strongly indicates the Love of God, and bespeaks a mind resting upon his Will.

The sum of the whole is this; that the Love of God and the love and practice of virtue is the same thing. To love

God, is to desire with all our hearts to please Him: and we *shall* please Him if we use our utmost endeavours to obey his laws. Wherever this obedience is *not* found, men may talk what they please of an ardent love for the Supreme Being; they love *themselves*, or the *world* much better. They may boast of *zeal* even to fury, in his service; it is nothing at all but *self-delusion*, or a wicked attempt to *deceive others*. To love God, is to love goodness, for God is goodness. If therefore to love goodness and to practise wickedness, is a contradiction; for the same reason, for one who is habitually wicked, to pretend to love God, is a contradiction also. As he only who doeth righteousness is righteous, so he only who doeth what is pleasing to God, is possessed of true Love for him.

LECTURE XLIII.

THE duty of *Prayer* next claims our attention.

Prayer is by far the most solemn act in which a human being can engage. It is *an immediate address to the great Governor of the universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.* It is an expression of all the feelings of a rational mind toward the Infinite, Eternal, Supreme, and All-perfect Mind; it is an expression of all the feelings of a dependent creature, towards his Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; that Being from whom he has received all his present blessings, and to whom alone he looks for the gratification of all his hopes of future felicity. Although the word *Prayer*, is sometimes

restricted to that part of an address to God, which is called *Petition*, or an expression *of our wishes respecting futurity*; yet it is with propriety used (and it is in this sense that we shall now use it) to signify *an address to God in general.* It is, in one word, *the intercourse of the soul with God.* The aweful nature of this service might inspire a terror which would be overwhelming to the mind, if we were not taught by the Christian Revelation, to address this venerable Being under the endearing appellation of *Our Father.*

As the obligation to the duty of prayer is grounded on a belief of the Omnipresence of God, at least of his knowledge of our temper and conduct, and a sense of our dependence upon Him; it would appear to us that a savage or a heathen would not be capable of understanding or feeling this obligation; and yet very illiterate nations, in all ages of the world, have shown the existence

of the principle; and the Heathens, whatever superstitious rites they might connect with it, lived in the habitual practice of the duty.

From this account of the *general nature* of prayer, it is evident that the contemplation of *every* perfection of the Divine Nature being attended with correspondent emotions of mind, *every* perfection may be the subject of an address to God. Every *natural* perfection is the proper subject of *Veneration*; every *intellectual* perfection, of *Admiration*, and every *moral* perfection, of *love* and *gratitude*; and *all together*, forming the grandest, the fairest character which angels can venerate, or seraphs adore, elevate the mind to its sublimest conceptions, and inspire it with serenity, resignation, joy, and boundless confidence.

The first part of prayer then, is *Adoration*, or the celebration of the Divine Perfections in general. *Praise*, in the

proper sense of the word, is the celebration of the Divine Goodness, as manifested in the creation, preservation, and government of *universal nature*; and *Thanksgiving* is an acknowledgment of this goodness to *ourselves*, or an expression of our sense of obligation for the many mercies we have received at the hands of God. This exercise proceeding from a grateful heart, has a tendency to excite the amiable affection of love to God, with the train of virtues with which it is attended, and which in the last Lectures were so particularly explained. Another part of prayer is *Confession*. This proceeds from a sense of having failed in the performance of our duty, and transgressed the Law of God, which feeling, constituting that state of mind which is called *Remorse*, by its natural operation, leads to the amendment of our faults.

Petition, that part of prayer to which the word prayer is often exclusively applied, is founded on our numerous imperfections

and wants, and a sense of our constant dependance on God for the support of our existence, and for every blessing we enjoy and hope for. In order to know what should be the subject of our petitions, or what particular favours we may ask of God, we may consider what *wishes* we may indulge with innocence and with advantage to ourselves and others; and as we are to *lay open our hearts* to God, suppressing every criminal desire, *these wishes* we may express in our addresses at his Throne. As we are designed to be trained up for immortality, and as those habits which will constitute our happiness for ever, are the greatest blessings we can receive, the habits of piety, benevolence, and universal righteousness, ought to be the first subject of our requests to our Heavenly Father. As we *know not what is good for us in this life*, although we may *express our wishes*, as far as they proceed from right views and amiable dispositions, yet we ought not to ask for *outward* things with importu-

nity, but always with submission to the will of God, and a resigned temper; and we should pray for this submission and resignation. As we are so constituted that we cannot be insensible to pain and natural evil, nor avoid wishing for health, peace, and tranquillity, we may express these feelings and these wishes to the merciful Parent who knoweth our frame and remembereth we are dust, but to these petitions should always be added, "Not our will, but thine, O God, be done." It is evident, then, that the *principal* subjects of petition—the things which are to be earnestly supplicated at the Throne of Grace, are *wisdom and goodness.*

The last part of prayer is *Intercession* for our brethren of mankind. This is the natural expression of the *social* and *benevolent* affections, and is moreover the best means of strengthening those feelings from which it arises.

Such is the *general nature* of prayer, and such are the *various parts* of it. The *circumstances* in which it is offered up, give rise to what are sometimes considered as the different *kinds* of prayer, namely *private* prayer, *family* prayer, and *public* prayer. As the *nature* and the *parts* of all are the same, so the obligations and the advantages are attended with very little difference.

I shall conclude this Lecture with some remarks on the subject in general, and probably in my next Lecture, I shall proceed to a *particular consideration* of the duty of *public* prayer, or the social worship of Almighty God.

From what has been said, we may learn the *true use and design* of prayer. The objections to it are frivolous in the highest degree: they are founded on no principles which are allowed; on no practices which are justified by the pre-

'ceding account of the nature and parts of prayer.

The design of this intercourse of the soul with its Maker, is not to inform God of what He did not know before; to acquaint Him with any wants, with any desires, with any case or circumstance of ours, which He would otherwise have been a stranger to. But the true design of it is to familiarise this glorious Being to our thoughts; to impress upon our minds, which are so much engrossed by the cares and concerns of this life, a deep, habitual, and practical sense of the Perfections and righteous Government of God; and by frequent and stated recollections of *his* majesty and *our* imperfection, of *his* all-sufficiency and *our* indigence, to raise and improve in us all those good dispositions, and to excite us to all those good actions, which alone can render us the proper objects of his favour, and which are the only foundation of our own true and solid

happiness. It is, in a word, to make us virtuous and happy. And what more can be said in recommendation of any practice, than that it is the necessary means of virtue and happiness? On this ground I rest the foundation of the duty of prayer. Let none, therefore, object to us that prayer is useless, because God knows what we have need of before we ask Him. This, we acknowledge as well as they. What we propose by offering up our prayers to God, is to declare our absolute dependence upon, and our submission to Him as our Maker, Benefactor, and Governor; to profess the entire confidence we have of his always doing what is fittest and best for us; and above all to render ourselves still more and more worthy of his approbation and favour.

Prayer is not only the expression of all the best affections of the human mind, and that particular act which distinguishes the human from the brutal

mind, but the best and most certain method of strengthening those affections from which it proceeds. Without it, I may venture to assert that, in a short time, all sense of an over-ruling Providence would be banished the earth. Of all the means of keeping alive, and in full exercise, the principles of benevolence, candour, forgiveness of injuries, humility, meekness, and love to man as well as piety to God, it is the most powerful and efficacious. And even as the means of *informing the understanding* as well as of mending the heart, when we consider how much the attention of mankind is taken up by other subjects, and how little time is devoted to religious improvement, we may ask, how a great number of those who attend our places of public worship, would be enabled to acquire that accurate and systematic knowledge of God, and of the great doctrines and duties of Religion, through the whole of their life, which is presented to them in one of our prayers,

when they attend the public worship of God, or which may be derived from one well composed prayer which they present to God in private?

It is not easy to say what degree of labour must be employed in the investigation, or what pains in learning by instruction, those truths which are thus taught in the most expeditious and impressive manner. And this is a circumstance which I am convinced is not sufficiently attended to.

He who believes that he constantly depends upon God; that God governs the world by his Providence, and interests Himself in all the affairs of it, must allow that these truths are truths of the highest importance, and that the belief of them ought to be kept up in the minds of all. And if he allow this, he must also allow the propriety and reasonableness of the duty of Prayer, which is the necessary means to these ends. And finally, if he

believes that the tempers of piety and virtue are necessary to the divine acceptance, and that Prayer is the means of promoting these, and not only so, but is likewise the express condition upon which God has *promised* to bestow all good things upon us, he must be a very inconsistent character indeed, if notwithstanding the knowledge which he believes God has of his wants, he refuses to make his requests to Him for the supply of them. So that upon the whole, I think it is a clear case, that we cannot live in the neglect of Prayer, without being guilty of the most presumptuous violation of an important duty, without being disrespectful to God, despisers of natural as well as revealed religion, enemies to our own true interest and happiness, and to the best interests of all with whom we are connected, and of mankind in general.

What remains then, but that we show the conviction of our minds, by the con-

sistency of our conduct? Let us never enter into any important engagement in life, without having first conversed with God. Let us always make conscience not only of *public* and *family*, but of *private* devotion. The languid state of the religious principle among us, is, I am convinced, chiefly to be ascribed to the neglect of this first, this most important of all duties. The efficacy of Prayer, has I know, by some been made a subject of inquiry. Let me repeat, that of *all the means* of religion, it is incalculably the *most* efficacious. In its nature it implies *sincerity;* for an address to God, which is not the expression of the feelings of the heart, is not Prayer at all. So efficacious then is Prayer, that *without* it, it is impossible to be a consistently good man; and the constant and habitual practice of it, is the best security of virtue, under all the temptations of life. Hence we see the reason why our Lord has laid so great a stress upon it, and the foundation of the assurance which He has given us, "ask

and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Prayer is the most certain means of rendering us the *proper objects* of those blessings which we pray for, and therefore, from the general laws of the Divine administration, of *securing* to us those blessings. Let us then, upon every interesting occasion in life; let us every morning and evening in particular, "pray to our Father, who seeth in secret, and who will reward us openly;" let us join with our *families* in thanksgivings and prayers, for the blessings of relative and domestic life, and for our mutual peace, virtue, and happiness, and let us not neglect the "assembling of ourselves together," for the purposes of *public* and *social* worship, "as the manner of too many is."

LECTURE XLIV.

I do not know any controversial work which has been more completely answered, than the essay of Mr. Wakefield on Public Worship. His groundless objections to this duty gave rise to the admirable works in defence of it, by Drs. Priestley and Disney, Mrs. Barbauld, Mr. Bruckner, and Mr. Simpson. Indeed, by his own concessions, and by his sketching out a plan of public worship, in which he says he himself could join, he has been his own successful opponent; and I doubt not, had his life been much longer spared, that on a calm review of the subject, he would have acknowledged that he had been carried, by his feelings, too far; and he might possibly have been led to suspect that the cause of his singularity of

opinion, was a disgust with the sentiments in the established forms of worship, and a prejudice against all the modes in use among Dissenters. The following observation of itself appears to me to contain in it an answer to all which he has written on the subject.

Our Lord has given us particular directions, first for private, and then for public prayer, to which He has added a form which may be either used by itself, or as a model for the public service of Almighty God. "When *thou* prayest," says He, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But *thou*, when *thou* prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." So much for *private* prayer. Our Lord then

proceeds to give directions for prayer in different circumstances, and by the use of the *plural* number, as well as the nature of his directions, He evidently means *public* prayer. "When *ye* pray," says He, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray *ye*." The form is likewise plural, and evidently intended for the use of *societies* of Christians. And it may be observed further, in confirmation of this remark, that *individuals*, in their private prayers, are cautioned against the hypocrisy of the *Pharisees;* and *societies*, in their public services, are cautioned against the vain repetitions of the *Heathens*, certainly in public services.

Having premised these general observations, in consequence of what Mr. Wakefield has written on this subject, let

us now proceed, more particularly to consider the obligations which we are under to the *public worship* of Almighty God.

From whatever arguments we infer the obligation to prayer in *any* circumstances, from the same we infer the obligation to *public, social* worship. So very intimate is the connexion which subsists between them, and such is their mutual influence, that they will live or die together. Would even Charity itself sanction the opinion, that when a person absents himself from *public* worship, it is that he may employ that time in *private* devotion? We have all a joint relation to God, and to each other as his creatures; we are all equally the subjects of his moral government, and the children of his parental care; we are all equally indebted to Him for our spiritual and temporal mercies; we partake alike of his Goodness, in our internal peace, and outward safety; in all our personal and family blessings; in all our present enjoyments, and in all our future hopes and prospects. And can it ever be

a question whether it is our duty to offer up to him our joint and grateful tribute of prayer and praise? Can it ever be a matter of *doubt* whether we are bound to unite in those devotional exercises which result from our relation to, and our dependence upon, one common Father, Benefactor, and Friend? It is in the public worship of God, that Man appears as the brother of Man, that outward distinctions are forgotten, that the elevated in this world are taught humility, and the lowly are raised to the contemplation of their privileges, as the children of God, and the heirs of immortality.

But amidst the cares and concerns of Life, which, though trifling and insipid and often tormenting, are nevertheless necessary and unavoidable, public worship is the *repose of the Soul.* A Sabbath, which I am convinced has made a part of every dispensation of revealed Religion, is a most *benevolent* institution. It is that *break* in the concerns of Life, which restores Man to himself, and re-

minds him that he is formed for immortality. As our connexion with earthly things is apt to create an undue attachment to them, it is highly necessary that our thoughts should sometimes be called off to objects in which we are more deeply interested. This is the great advantage of public worship. It serves to remind us of the perishing nature of all sensible things; it leads us to reflect upon our uncertain, probationary state; it prevents us from being too deeply affected by the events which take place in the world around us, and it naturally raises our views and thoughts to scenes of higher enjoyment and of greater permanency. By the frequent review of the great objects of our faith, our religious belief and confidence, are strengthened and confirmed. By the constant returns of social worship, our devotional feelings are kept in exercise, and our piety is not suffered to languish. Holding converse with God, who is the Author of Peace, the Lover of Concord, and the Parent of all Good,

has an evident tendency to correct every evil disposition, and in some measure to form our minds to a resemblance of those excellencies which we contemplate and admire. This sacred intercourse has a direct effect to appease every turbulent emotion of our spirits, to silence envy, malice, and revenge, and every tormenting criminal passion, to strengthen every benevolent and generous feeling, to call forth every finer, every sublimer sentiment, and to lead us to the cultivation and practice of every Christian grace and virtue. To raise our minds frequently from imperfect beings, and from scenes of imperfection, to the contemplation of all possible perfection, extends their capacity, as well as gratifies their most elevated desires. I hope I can appeal to your own experience for the truth of these observations. At a period when your mind has been previously agitated by a multiplicity of cares, have you not often found, after having entered the house of God, conversed with your Maker, and been re-

minded of some of the great truths of Religion; that the tumult of your passions has subsided, that the train of your ideas has received a different direction; that your attention has been called from earthly to heavenly objects; and that you have reason to reproach yourself with having been careful and troubled about many things, while Religion, which has been so little regarded, is the one thing needful. Pity it is that the contemplations which then occupy the mind, and the resolutions which are formed in consequence of them, should so often resemble the morning cloud, or the early dew, which soon passeth away. Why, ye mean concerns of *Time*, will ye take off so much of my attention from the momentous concerns of *Eternity?* Why, ye objects of *worldly* bliss, will ye alienate my affections from my God? Frequently to renew those impressions which are made during the seasons of Divine worship, is the only method which can be

devised to render them habitual, and permanent principles of action.

It is obvious to remark, that the enjoyments of sense are at best unsatisfactory in their nature, and uncertain in their duration. They are likewise of such a kind as to depend upon the present constitution of the body. But *hereafter* this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality; hereafter these senses, which are the inlets to so many pleasures, will be greatly changed, and we shall probably be endued with faculties of a more exalted nature. We shall then be capable of relishing the pleasures of Religion in the highest degree, and we shall be incapable of relishing any pleasures which are incompatible with them. Nor is the period when this event will take place very distant. Time, and the things of time will, with us, soon be over. A few revolving years at longest, a few returning days perhaps, will finish our scene of

probation. Swiftly fly those moments which will carry our slender bark down the stream of time into the boundless ocean of eternity. If we do not *now* embrace those opportunities with which we are favoured, of acquiring a taste for the pleasures of Religion, it is probable that we shall repent of our folly, when repentance will come too late. Heaven cannot be obtained—it cannot be *enjoyed* without suitable dispositions of soul. Are we desirous of obtaining it? Are we desirous of enjoying the pleasures which it affords? We must then cultivate habits of piety, and acquire a relish for *mental* enjoyments, for those of social devotion in particular, in which the happiness of heaven will in a great measure consist.

Public worship being so honourable and excellent, so pleasing and advantageous, and so considerable a part of *Divine* morality, how great must be the folly and impiety, the insensibility and

hardness of heart, not to say ingratitude, of those who live in the habitual neglect of it! The laws of God, the laws of our country, a regard to decency and propriety, a regard to our own best interest, and to the interest of society, all require us to meet together, at stated times, for the worship of the Deity. Few there are who have both so much wisdom and so much goodness, as not to stand in need of this for their instruction and improvement. And if we allowed that there were some persons who wanted neither to be taught their duty, nor reminded of the obligations which they are under to practise *it*; if we allowed that public worship could produce no beneficial effect upon persons of so *perfect* a character, still we must insist upon it that it is their duty to join in it with a view of animating *others* to a similar conduct by *their example*. Whatever any persons may think of *themselves*, I doubt not they must be convinced, that there are some in the world who are

not in all respects so wise as they might be, and so good as they ought to be. If no other motive will induce them to join in the public worship of God, a concern for the happiness of such ought to be sufficient for this purpose. Example has a powerful influence upon the generality of mankind, who, when they see a person of superior knowledge and reputation habitually frequenting the House of God, will be convinced of the propriety and usefulness of such a conduct, and naturally led to imitate it.

So many and so great are the obligations which we are under to social worship, that I hope the consideration of them will prevent any of us from suffering ourselves to be detained from it by vain or trifling pretences. We are not, indeed, obliged to be at church, at those seasons when we are called upon to perform acts of mercy at other places, or when we could not attend there without endangering our health, At such times

we are not only excusable, but in the way of our duty, when we absent ourselves from the House of God. But in giving this advice I am sensible of an inconvenience. I am afraid it will be attended to only by those for whom it was *not* designed. The man of true piety, whose delight is in the service of his God, but who would be serving Him if he were able, whether he was in the church or in his closet, is apt to suffer nothing but absolute inability to *detain him* from public worship; while the man who stands *most in need* of being reminded of his duty, is apt to avail himself of every excuse, however trifling, to absent himself from it. The misfortune is, that those whose duty it is to be at *home* will be often found at church; whilst those whose duty it is to be at church, will be found at other places. The error of the former, however, is much more excusable and much less pernicious in its consequences than the error of the latter, as nothing but a regard to

our own safety, or the happiness of others, ought to prevent us from engaging at proper times in the worship of God. With this exception, we ought, at all the appointed seasons of public worship, to be found in the House of God, joining with our fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians in the delightful exercises of Religion. This is our duty, this our interest, this our highest happiness. Let us then most cheerfully devote one seventh part of our time to the service of that God who has given us all. Let us rejoice on the return of every Sabbath. Let us, on that sacred day, come into the courts of the Lord with thanksgiving, and enter his gates with praise. Let us perform the various parts of religious worship with a becoming temper of mind, and attend to the instructions which shall be delivered, not with a desire of being entertained with something new and curious, but with a desire of becoming wiser and better, more fit for the duties of life, and more fit for

death. Let sincerity and humility accompany all our services. And if, with a sincere and humble temper of mind, we frequently assemble together for the purpose of our own religious improvement, and that of others, the consequence will be, the consequence must be, that we shall grow in the knowledge and love of God, and be making constant advances in every Christian disposition, until at length we shall be gradually formed to a capacity of engaging in the services, and relishing the pleasures, of the celestial world.

LECTURE XLV.

In a course of lectures on moral philosophy, it may naturally be expected, that in connexion with the subject of *public worship*, some observations should be made on *ecclesiastical establishments* in Religion, and on the comparative advantages of *liturgies*, and prayers delivered from *memory*, or *immediate conception*.

If we were to consider the question of *ecclesiastical establishments* in the *abstract*, perhaps the conclusion would be, that it is the duty of the civil magistrate to countenance and protect the profession of Religion under *every form*; but excepting in his *individual capacity* and by *his own* example, to discover a partiality

to *no particular* form. Religion is a concern between *man* and his *Maker;* and as it is incomparably the *most important* of all concerns, so it is that, in which the greatest care should be taken, that no inducement be presented to the mind to act inconsistently with sincerity. I am sensible of the delicacy of the ground to which my next step will lead me. But I cannot help observing, with a view of applying the principle to the present case, that what *appears fair in speculation,* in consequence of peculiar circumstances, will not in every case carry with it the greatest degree of *practical utility.* Whatever censure I may incur, I hesitate not to give it as an opinion, formed after considerable attention to the subject, that, *in this country, and in the present state of society; with our laws, our institutions, our manners, and our habits, the total abolition of the establishment would be attended with more inconveniences than advantages;* in a word, that it is *the reparation of the structure which is to be*

wished for, and not its demolition; or to speak in the plainest terms possible, the *reformation* of the church, and not its *subversion.* Attached to many of its usages, if by prejudice, I trust by no unamiable or unworthy prejudice, I wish the Church of England HEALTH; and in its renovated state, that state which will immediately be described, *prosperity and stability.* I wish it to exhibit to the world, —what the world has never yet seen in a *national* church—the glorious spectacle of a CHRISTIAN and a PROTESTANT church —that is of a Church which acknowledges *no Head, no Lawgiver* but CHRIST, and no *Creeds,* no *Articles of Faith,* but such as are *actually contained* in the BIBLE. In expressing this wish I am confident I manifest the truest regard for the Church of England. Give me the friend who will point out a fault and assist me to correct it, and not, under this specious disguise, the *flatterer* who will conceal my fault or represent it as an excellence. Notwithstanding their

professions of attachment, *justly to be suspected*, are those pretended friends of the establishment, who, by endeavouring to preserve its existence in a *sickly* state, are accelerating its destruction; and who, rather than reform those abuses which the lapse of nearly three centuries must have introduced, would expel from its communion the *consistent Christian and the Protestant*, and divide its emoluments between *fanatics* and *impostors*. For at present, notwithstanding the *professed* belief of *so much more* than Christianity and Protestantism require, the *actual* belief of *nothing* is secured. The uniformity which exists is *not* an uniformity of *opinion*. I tremble when I think what it is—what it implies—what good it prevents, and what evils it produces. God of mercy! look with pity on my country, and grant that it may be distinguished among the nations of the earth, by the love and practice of *truth*.

Notwithstanding some unfavourable circumstances of the present times, which

have chilled the ardour of many minds of a cooler temperature than my own, I cannot help indulging the delightful persuasion that the time is not very distant when this accumulated and perpetually accumulating mass of evils will be removed. The general recognition of the two great principles of Christianity and Protestantism; (which were indeed *discerned* by our reformers, but in their night of intellectual darkness too soon lost sight of, to afford them much assistance,) the acknowledgment of many great general principles, and a frequent recurrence to them; the extensive circulation of the Scriptures; and the instruction of the poor; the actual change of opinion of many, surely it will not be insinuated the *least enlightened* of mankind; above all clear ideas of the nature—(I need not say *obligation*—the nature implies *Supreme Authority*,) of *truth*, and particularly that branch of it, *religious sincerity*; will not prove *feeble* motives of human conduct, but will produce the most glorious

effects. Principles are received — they will be applied. When the substantial food of *true knowledge* is to be procured, nothing else will satisfy the cravings of the human mind. Individuals may have distempered eyes, or eyes which cannot bear a sudden light, or they may voluntarily shut them, but the *dawn will brighten into day.*

It is of great importance that the *object* which every consistent Christian and Protestant has in view should be clear and definite, and that the *means* by which it is prosecuted should bear the same character. Let it be understood that it is not a *revision* or an *alteration* of the articles, creeds, liturgies, and homilies which will be sufficient. The labour here would be infinite, the agreement almost impossible, and after all, the Anti-Christian and Anti-Protestant principles would be recognised and acted upon. *These principles must be abandoned.* And what is a remarkable circumstance, although

by retaining them, the business would be attended with insurmountable difficulties; by abandoning them altogether it would proceed with the greatest facility. The power is vested solely in the *legislature of this country.* An *attention* to the subject must lead to an application to the legislature; and it is to be wished that this should be made through the medium of an enlightened and conscientious bench of bishops. An application to the legislature, general and persevered in, must be finally attended with success. The object to be accomplished is this, *to substitute the* BIBLE *in the room of the* THIRTY-NINE *articles, and to* PERMIT *the use of a short and unexceptionable form of Prayer, by those who cannot in conscience use the present.* Connected with such a liberal and broad establishment; that is with a truly *Christian* and *Protestant* establishment, would be the repeal of the act of uniformity, and the legal recognition of *perfect liberty* in matters of Religion. The abolition of tithes, and

the substitution of a less exceptionable mode of providing for the support of the clergy, would be a future and distinct regulation. As this is in all circumstances to be wished for, so in such circumstances it would, doubtless, speedily take place.

And the only spring to put all these causes in immediate operation is *religious sincerity* in the application of principles which have too long been permitted to slumber, but which must now be awakened. The whole will soon be effected, when a sense of the *heinousness* of *perjury* is in every mind a practical principle, and when subscription to articles which are not believed, is acknowledged to be a species of crime comprehended under that genus for which two persons, in the apostolic age, (certainly to answer some important purpose,) were stricken dead by the immediate visitation of God.

I confess, in a church thus constituted, if the clergy are prohibited from forming a part of the lower branch of the legislature, I do not see any thing unreasonable in the bishops being allowed a seat in the higher, whose principal employment would still be that of *Overseers* in their legislative capacity; that is, of watching over the spirit of British jurisprudence, and seeing, that in no cases, it is inconsistent with, but always contains in it as much as possible, of the just, gentle, and benevolent spirit of the Gospel.

As a further recommendation of the two alterations proposed, I would just observe, that the former is an act between the bishop and the person ordained, and the latter would induce thousands to go to church, who are disgusted with the length of the present service, its want of method and connexion, and its many repetitions.

The propriety of a general liturgy is presumed in this lecture. A powerful argument in its favour, is, that *it is the present mode*, and we are not pleading for any unnecessary alterations. It appears likewise best calculated to answer the ends of public worship, which are, to fix the mind on God, to give the clearest ideas of his character and administration, of our obligations to Him, and expectations from Him; and to strengthen in the mind all pious and virtuous affections; in a word, to inform the understanding and to improve the heart.

Now does not that mode promise best to accomplish these ends, which calls forth the active exertions of every individual who joins in the service? When the minister's is the only voice that is employed, the attention of the people is apt to wander from the true object of devotion, and the formation of a general habit of inattention, a mental infirmity of the most lamentable kind, is by this means justly to be appre-

hended. The majority of a congregation are not used, during the week, to think long on any subject, without reading or speaking. It will therefore be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to do it in their public devotions. And the mode of worship should be such as to keep it, if possible, from being fatiguing to any sincere mind. The introduction, at intervals, of what are called, (though improperly,) *responses*, and the joint pronunciation of the word *Amen*, by the people, interest them in the service, and are such an exertion of their active powers, as tends to fix their attention more, and to raise their devotional feelings. These advantages are particularly experienced by children, to whom public worship should be rendered as interesting as possible. This union of voices in our prayers, does also strongly express the ideas of our common relation to one another as brethren, as well as of our common relation to GOD, as our Father; which are important effects of true devotion. That the advantages however of

both modes of prayer may be enjoyed, in the pulpit, both before and after sermon, let the minister be at full liberty (as indeed he is at present) to read what prayers he may think proper, *or to pray* from immediate conception.

The most painful part of this lecture, which would have been omitted if I had listened to any voice but that of *Duty*, is reserved for its conclusion.

As a writer on Morals, although an admirer of the works of Dr. Paley in general, yet I cannot but pass the *most unqualified censure* on what he has observed in his chapter on *Subcription to articles of Religion*, in that on *oaths to observe local statutes*, and to the definition, and a few of the observations in that *on Lies*. Nothing is so injurious to the cause of Truth and Virtue, as the attempt to *bring down* the standard of Morality to political institutions, to local or temporary customs, or to private practice. It is the duty of the patriot, the lover of

Truth, and the Christian, to endeavour to *raise* to the standard of Christian morality, political institutions, local and temporary customs, and private practice. Had Dr. Paley endeavoured to do this, both by his instructions and example, what a name would he have sent down the stream of time? What is of much more importance, what a benefactor would he have been to mankind? At present, I am inclined to doubt, whether his principles, countenanced by his practice, and his having uttered the horrid sentiment, "I cannot afford to keep a conscience," have not produced more moral evil, than all his writings, and the excellence of his example in other respects have produced good to the world. Having known an instance in which the poisonous sentiment has been avowed and acted upon, and apprehending that nothing is more common than the application of his principles to the case of false oaths, and that of subscription to articles of religion which are not believed, I cannot express myself

in milder language, than that which duty, not inclination, has forced me to adopt. If there were an university which required of all who were admitted to its honours—if there were another which required of all who were admitted within its walls, a subscription to articles of religion, which were not believed, an oath to the observance of statutes which were *not* observed, it is natural to suppose that little attention would be paid to the subject of Moral Philosophy in such universities, and that every other system must be superseded by that universally accommodating one of Dr. Paley's. Truth cannot stoop so low as to submit to a confutation of his principles. Short indeed is his defence, of what it is evident his own heart could not approve. It was a loathsome object in a road which he was determined to pass, from which he wished to shut his eyes, and the son of Dr. Percival could not have imposed upon him a more painful task, than by soliciting his opinion and advice previously to his en-

tering into the Church. That such a mind should have been so corrupted, and should have diffused the corruption so widely, is an effect of the continuance of these institutions of the darker ages, which speaks a language which to the honest heart needs no explanation. The inconsistency of man is in this case a subject of consolation. In all other cases, I trust Dr. Paley would have laid down, and have acted on purer principles. It is not to be supposed that any temptation, could have led him to commit, or to defend the crime of *Forgery;* and yet in whatever degree this crime may be placed in the scale of moral turpitude, I presume no one will hesitate to acknowledge that it ought to be placed *lower*, than the crime, of " lying not unto Men but unto God."

LECTURE XLVI.

We are now come to the consideration of the most important subject which can employ the attention of the human mind; I mean the doctrine of a *future state*, and the arguments by which it is supported. To myself, and to those whose sun is in the western horizon, what subject, when compared with this, can lay any claim to our attention? We can, from our own knowledge, communicate a serious truth to the youngest among you. Swiftly fly those moments, the flight of which forms the only difference between us. It will soon be of equal importance to you all. It has indeed been presumed, during the course of the preceding lectures, that Man is a being designed by his Maker for *Immortality*. If this were not the case,

the foundation, the rule, and the motives of his duty, would be very different from those here laid down.

It has pleased God to endue us with a faculty, by which we can, as it were, bring *past* events present to the mind; but what is the faculty which can exhibit to our view the *scenes beyond the grave?* Consciousness informs us of our *present* existence. But who, excepting our Maker Himself, could have given us certain information of a *future* existence, after the dissolution of that system on which vitality at present depends?

The question is, what is the design of God with respect to his creature Man? Now, how can this be known but by direct communication from God Himself, or by inferences drawn from his perfections and character?

The belief of a future state seems coeval with man. An intimation of the fact, I can-

not doubt, must have been given by immediate revelation from God Himself to our first parents, and from them transmitted by tradition to their posterity. Although very probable arguments from reason and the light of nature are brought in support of this great doctrine, yet they were not the actual cause of the belief of it, nor are they the foundation on which it rests. *Information from God,* must have been the first cause of belief which became in time obscure and inoperative; *information from God, positive* and *definite,* and confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is the *only satisfactory* ground of belief that the grave is not the termination of our existence, but that we are formed for immortality. It may be asked, then, of what use are the natural arguments, which some have represented as carrying with them a very high degree of probability, and others as having in them very little solidity? It appears to me that allowing the *infinite Perfection* of God,

they do carry with them a high degree of probability. But this, perhaps, could only be known by Revelation. And certain it is that the arguments hence derived, which may be called the *moral* arguments, are much stronger than those insisted upon by Socrates and his disciples, and other ancient philosophers, which may be called the *metaphysical* arguments. The advantage of considering these arguments is, that we may see how the doctrines of Revelation are confirmed by the purest dictates of reason, and that those who are dissatisfied with the evidences of Christianity may see that there are, independently of Revelation, strong arguments from reason in favour of a future existence. In a conversation which I had with Dr. Franklin, at Passy, in the year 1784, he asked me why Dr. Priestley laid so little stress on these arguments? I answered, because he rested the doctrine on Revelation. He replied, as Dr. Priestley allows a future state to be the great

doctrine of Christianity, so that when admitted and acted upon, the end of this Revelation is answered, why does he speak slightingly of those arguments upon which others have received the same doctrine?

But to proceed to the subject — Omitting the consideration of the argument drawn from the *nature* of the soul, because different opinions prevail on this point, (although I think there is great weight in it,) I shall begin with that which respects its *intellectual* and *moral powers.*

All writers on this subject seem to unite in opinion, that a reasonable expectation of an existence beyond the present, may be inferred from *the ability which the human mind possesses of making continual improvements.*

To whatever branch of knowledge we turn our thoughts, we find within our-

selves a power of making very surprising advances. The more industry we employ in the prosecution of our intellectual labours, and the more pains we bestow in the strengthening our virtuous dispositions and habits, the greater will be our progress; and to such heights of perfection may we arrive by dint of application, labour, and attention, that it is almost impossible to fix any limits to our attainments. The longer we live, the higher may we rise in the scale of wisdom and virtue. The longer we continue *men*, the more nearly is it in our power to resemble *angels*. And as we are enabled to the *end of life*, to make great advances in every intellectual and moral acquisition, can we think that *death* was designed to put an everlasting stop to our attainments? Is it agreeable to those ideas which we have formed of the *Divine Wisdom* as well as *Goodness*, to suppose that He would create a set of beings, and endue them with abilities to make great attainments in wisdom and

virtue, and then, when they had taken all possible pains to enlarge their minds and purify their hearts, then, when qualified for higher pursuits, when matured for a celestial soil, blot them out of existence? Is it not much more natural and much more reasonable to believe, that God who delights to see his creatures grow more and more into a resemblance of Himself, has a happy existence, beyond this scene of intellectual and moral imperfection, for men of capacious minds and expansive hearts, where their attempts to improve in wisdom, and in piety and benevolence will be crowned with abundant success; where their minds will be still more and more refined, and where their higher powers will be raised to a higher degree of perfection? From this consideration, the man whose mind is formed to a taste for intellectual and moral enjoyments, may, at his death, indulge a reasonable hope of a future existence in which this taste will be gratified.

And to this we may add another reflection; that we are made capable of enjoying far greater degrees of *happiness* than this world is able to afford.

We are formed in such a manner as to receive our purest delights and our most substantial pleasures, not from the gratification of our lower appetites, but from the nobler powers of the mind. Now from the imperfections and wants, the cares and concerns of the present state, it frequently happens that our intellectual pleasures are disturbed by a variety of ungovernable appetites, and that we are drawn off from the delightful pursuits of wisdom and virtue, by our animal inclinations, or prevented from attending to them by the necessary business of life. And what is the necessary business of life to most, but a succession of trifling, though alas! necessary concerns? What is it to many but a total abstraction from intellectual and moral pursuits, and one continued scene of bodily labour and

mental anxiety? With capacious powers of enjoyment, Man looks in vain for objects to gratify those powers. It should seem then highly probable, that the time will come, when the imperfections of the present state will be done away, when the pleasures of the mind will no more be disturbed by low desires and sordid cares, and when it will be able to enjoy its own, its appropriate delights, without interruption.

Another argument for a future existence, may be derived from that *eager desire of immortality,* which is implanted in the human breast. *Is not this* the voice of God within us? Is it not to be attended to? We know of no other desire or propensity in our nature, which has not some object on which it may be exercised. Our passions are none of them given us in vain, but are all intended to meet with their proper indulgence. And shall not this be the case with the sublimest principle of our nature? As then,

in every other part of our constitution, the Supreme Being has manifested the most surprising skill, can we imagine, that in this particular instance, the Divine Wisdom is defective? that here alone He has given us a strong desire which can never meet with any gratification, and which of consequence He must either have implanted in our nature to no purpose at all, or else with a design to delude us? Is it not much more agreeable to all those ideas which we have formed of the Divine attributes to suppose, that our Creator has not implanted within us this *longing after Immortality* in vain, but that He has placed it within the breasts of all mankind, as a natural and sure indication of a future state; and that, as He has given us the *desire*, so He will also give us the gratification of it.

It will here be proper to mention another consideration, which seems to add great strength to this argument. The desire of immortality is always the

strongest in *the most virtuous minds.* In those persons who take little pains to cultivate their higher powers, this desire is faint and languid; but in proportion as their solicitude to improve in Wisdom and Holiness increases, their longing after immortality becomes strong and ardent. Thus that desire of living again after death which the God of Nature has given us, is the most powerful motive to Virtue. It excites us to take all possible pains to qualify ourselves for that existence beyond the grave which it forebodes; it prompts us to endeavour, by a life of piety and undissembled goodness, to prepare for an existence, where our happiness will undoubtedly depend on our present behaviour. Surely then, as the desire of Immortality strongly prompts us to the practice of every good work, to gain our Maker's approbation; as every fresh advance in the path of virtue invigorates our longing after an existence beyond the present, there either must be an hereafter, or there is something won-

derfully unaccountable in our make and constitution.

Another argument which reason affords us in favour of a future existence, is, that men, in all ages and nations of the world, have *professed a belief of it.*

The contradiction of this fact, which I have sometimes been a witness to, and the assertion that mankind had scarcely the idea of a future state, before it was "brought to light by the Gospel," which means that a *new light was thrown upon it;* —— the contradiction of this fact, I say, is the contradiction of all history. I venture to assert that no idea was more familiar to the ancients. There is a remarkable passage in Livy to this purpose, which I wonder has not more frequently been brought forward. At so early a period as the death of Romulus, which I doubt not was effected by the senate, on account of his arbitrary proceedings, he informs us, that a senator of the name of Proculus

Julius, went into a public assembly, and said, "Romulus, O Romans, the parent of this city, early this morning, on a sudden descended from heaven, and presented himself before me. When I stood in a state of astonishment, and full of reverence, and praying that I might be permitted to approach him, 'Go,' says he, 'tell the Romans, that the celestial deities will that my Rome should be the capital of the whole world, wherefore let them cultivate the arts of war. Let them know, and deliver to posterity, that no human power will be able to stand against the Roman arms.' And having said these words he ascended on high." The Romans did not say, "how is this possible, Romulus is dead, and consequently could not appear to you;" but we are told that it is wonderful what credit was given to the man relating these things, and how much the anxiety occasioned by the death of Romulus among the common people and the army, was soothed by this belief of his immortality. — Livy. l. 1. c. 16. It

may be added, that most of the heathen deities were departed heroes; and a book of Homer and another of Virgil, contain a particular account of the state of the good and the bad after death.

Almost every heathen nation, indeed, entertained different ideas concerning this state, which in general were so ridiculous and extravagant as to render a particular revelation on the subject highly necessary; but that they had some notions of a futurity is past dispute, and not merely of a futurity, but also of a state of retribution. They were in general of opinion, that bad men would be committed to some place of punishment, and that those who had distinguished themselves by virtuous actions, would be admitted into a country where they would enjoy every pleasure which their hearts could desire. The funeral honours which they paid to their departed heroes, is a clear proof of their belief in a world to come. Those who had rendered them-

selves conspicuous by their bravery and magnanimity, they always considered as gone to a place of consummate felicity, to receive the reward of their past good conduct. Fully impressed with this notion, they frequently paid them religious honours; either imploring their assistance, or celebrating those virtues which had rendered them immortal. And this opinion concerning a futurity is found, not only among those nations where arts and knowledge met with the greatest encouragement, but in those countries where the minds of men were most rude and barbarous, and where they were involved in the grossest ignorance. In the remotest parts of the globe; in those parts which are at the greatest distance from civilization, we find the same notion strongly prevailing. And whence could this general notion of a futurity arise? Whence does it happen, that wherever the belief of a God is to be met with (and with very few exceptions indeed, wherever there is a being which may be

called human, some belief of higher powers prevails) there is also some notion of an existence beyond the present? To imagine that it was entirely invented and propagated by lawgivers and politicians, is absurd. Had that been the case, it would have been confined to some particular nations, while others could have had no idea at all about it. Is it not much more reasonable to suppose, that God Himself has made provision, that it should be communicated to men through the whole world, and that He did it for the wise design, to engage them to the practice of those virtues, which will, for the most part, make them happy in this world, and certainly prepare them for future glory and felicity?

The remainder of this important subject will be prosecuted in a future Lecture.

LECTURE XLVII.

We have been considering *that subject* in which every individual amongst us is most deeply interested; which ought not one moment to be lost sight of, as it constitutes the dignity of man; which, indeed, throws that light into the variegated picture of human life, which renders it delightful to the imagination, and without a belief in which, duty and obligation would be no more than words of transient impression, conscience would be a feeble and an inoperative principle, suicide in certain circumstances would be manly dignity, and the great practical rule of life would be "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

The natural argument for a future state, which we shall next mention, is that taken from the unequal distribution of good and evil in this present life.

The general rule of the Divine Government in this world is, that virtue should be rewarded and vice punished. But the exceptions to this rule are so many and so striking, that the man who acts from a principle of cool self-interest, would in many instances think himself justified in paying no regard to it. The wisdom of the men of this world, and of those who act for immortality, is of a different nature. With respect to the exceptions to the great general rule just laid down, it is a remarkable circumstance that the highest degree of virtue is not rewarded in this world, and the highest degree of vice is not punished. How many, for the sake of conscience, and the good of others, are called to sacrifice that on which all human happiness depends, human life itself! How

many a tyrant and slave of ambition, who has had the blood of millions on his soul, has had a conscience seared as with a hot iron! Of what distress is the feeling heart susceptible equal to that which it experiences from the follies, the wickedness and the miseries of others? Are not the folly and wickedness of those with whom they are connected, to many, the cause of all the trouble which they experience in life? And is not this trouble frequently the effect of their own kindness and compassion? Take away the consolation—I may say the *joy*, which results from the hope of future felicity, and in many cases, (I do not assert the greater number,) it will be found that the most vicious are the most prosperous, and, perhaps, the most happy; and the most virtuous the most miserable. Can a God of Justice suffer this to be the case in a single instance? Certainly not, if you allow only a degree of power equal to prevent it. Under the Government

of infinite Love armed with Omnipotence it *cannot* be. We may, therefore, from this consideration alone, ground a belief, that the time will come, when the wicked will be divested of all his splendour, and suffer the punishment which his crimes deserve, and when virtue shall be redeemed from misery and receive a crown of immortal happiness in recompence for her past distresses.

The last argument which I shall offer in support of the natural credibility of a future state, is derived from the general analogy of nature. From observing the plan of Providence in those things which come under our inspection, we naturally infer a similar plan or economy in those things which lie beyond our observation. This is called reasoning from analogy; and though it cannot be said to be actually proving any thing, yet it prepares the way for proofs, supersedes objections drawn from the supposed impossibility or incredibility of the thing, and

by showing that it may be, or that it is probable, facilitates the belief that it is.

In the present world, then, we see matter perpetually changing its situation and form, and undergoing various modifications, but never destroyed or annihilated. We see great *alterations* in every body around us, but nothing *lost* or *consumed.* And if the human soul entirely perishes at death, it is in this important respect inferior to the smallest particle of matter.

Consider how sleep pervades the human frame, and in soft yet strong chains binds up the soul of man and suspends its faculties; yet in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the bands are burst, and the soul restored to volition and to action. May not the bands of death be loosed in like manner, and after we have spent our appointed time in the grave, may we not awake again to immortal life and blessedness?

The heavenly bodies, after they have afforded us their cheering light, retire from our view; in a short time they rise again, bright and glorious as ever. In the declining season of the year, the grass of the field loses its wonted verdure, the plants droop and wither, the trees let fall their leaves, and the whole vegetable world seems consigned to utter destruction. But when the cold blasts of winter are over; when, in the genial months of spring, the sun begins again to warm the earth, all nature by degrees revives; the trees and plants put forth new leaves, and the fields resume their verdure and beauty.

But still more striking are the different stages of existence, through which a variety of *living* creatures pass. The numerous tribes of *insects* in particular, after having subsisted their proper time under one form, seem divested of all sense of life. On a sudden they are reanimated and assume a shape quite

different from that which they before possessed. Why then should it seem a thing incredible or unreasonable, that, when we have passed our appointed time in our present station, and have resigned ourselves into the arms of death, God should also, by his almighty power, enliven us again, furnish us with new capacities of enjoyment, and advance us to a higher and more perfect state of existence? Nature furnishes us with a variety of appearances which plainly "point out an hereafter and intimate eternity to man."

These arguments in favour of a future existence, as well as the other doctrines of natural religion, have been much better understood and more clearly explained by those who have been favoured with the light of the Gospel, than they ever were by the ancient divines and philosophers. They demonstrate, I think, the possibility, the credibility, and the probability of a future state. But in an

affair of such infinite importance, it is greatly to be wished that such proof might be afforded as is level to the capacities of all; and that we might be favoured with some account of the *nature, mode of existence, employments,* and *duration* of that state to which death will introduce us. It is the great happiness of Christians, that every wish which they could reasonably form upon this subject is gratified. To give the minds of the inquisitive all desirable satisfaction; to convince those of a future state who had neither leisure nor ability to investigate it by the deductions of reason; to show us in some degree in what the happiness of it will consist, how long it will continue, and by what means it is to be obtained, it pleased the benevolent Creator of man to interpose by a particular Revelation, and to send Jesus Christ into the world, invested with divine power and authority. Jesus Christ is the teacher, the author, the prince or leader, the dispenser of eternal life. He has

drawn aside the veil which concealed celestial objects from our view, and given us all the information concerning the world to come, which is proper for our condition, and promotive of our virtue and happiness; perhaps all the information which our finite understandings are able to comprehend. Is there any thing more to be wished for to add to this belief that confidence which may denominate it knowledge? The *positive assurance* of it by a person who was commissioned from heaven, and who proved his commission by working miracles, seems to be all which any reasonable person could desire. If a wish might be formed without subjecting us to the charge of incredulity and want of reliance upon the faithfulness of God, it would be this, that a *sensible and experimental proof of the fact* might be exhibited to the world, by the *actual resurrection* of a person from the dead.

Let every heart exult with gratitude and joy, our all gracious Father in heaven

has given us even this evidence. That divinely commissioned Instructor who taught the doctrine of a resurrection, confirmed the truth of what he taught by rising from the dead Himself. The proof is complete and perfect. With great truth, beauty, and propriety, might the Apostle John begin his epistle to Christians in general in these words: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, we declare unto you; for the life to come was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

Let this belief influence, if possible, every thought and feeling, certainly every word and action of our lives. By Lord Shaftesbury and some writers who have refined too much, it has been represented as a *selfish* principle. When the nature

of the happiness promised in the Gospel is considered, that it consists in the suppression of every low and selfish passion, and in the exercise of all the higher powers of the soul; that it is a happiness resulting from wisdom and virtue, and the society of all the wise and good in the creation; and that the rule of duty, by observing which it is to be obtained, is the cultivation of every benevolent principle, and the practice of all good actions; that it shows a superiority to all present things, and that the affections are placed on things above, and not on things on the earth; that it is by having our citizenship in heaven, and walking by faith and not by sight; we shall be convinced that it is the sublimest principle by which a human being can regulate his conduct, and that in one word "a Christian is the highest style of man."

Let then the sanctions of Revelation, united to the dictates of reason, influence us to the constant practice of every duty

explained and recommended in this course of Lectures; and I pray God that we may enjoy internal and external peace, the love of our fellow-creatures, the smiles of Heaven, a consciousness of usefulness and dignity in this world, and everlasting life and happiness in the world which is to come.

LECTURE XLVIII.

THE concluding Lectures of this course of moral and religious Instruction will be on the subject of SINCERITY.

In the present imperfect state, where the goodness of the best of men is exceedingly circumscribed, and the wisdom of the wisest confined within very narrow limits, a mind *superior to Deceit,* and fraught with *Integrity* is the most that can be expected. In the present state, where *absolute perfection* is not to be found, we must only look for *Sincerity* in the most finished characters. Indeed, *Sincerity* is *human perfection,* and the same word, in Scripture, is used to express them both. Where this is wanting there can be no *moral* worth, and the

highest intellectual attainments are indeed but as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." *Sincerity* constitutes true *identity* of character, as this is a quality which belongs to it *at all times* and *in all circumstances.* It depends not upon the changing fashions of the world, nor bends in low submission to the humours of a fantastic, or to the vices of a degenerate age; but like some rare and curious piece of antiquity, it is *always highly esteemed* for its *own solid worth* and *beautiful simplicity.* Nevertheless, it happens in this, as in other cases, that the *general approbation* of Sincerity has occasioned many *affectations* and *counterfeits* of it; it may not therefore be amiss just to mention the principal of these, before we proceed more directly to explain and recommend this inestimable virtue.

And in the first place, some persons, as a proof of their sincerity, are mightily *zealous* about certain opinions and practices, (both in religious and common

matters,) which are of an *indifferent* nature. For this they plead conscience and a sincere regard to truth. But are not truth and conscience *too sacred* to be interested in matters of such trifling importance? Whoever will impartially consider how *trivial* in general the *subject* of their *zeal* is, and yet how *warm* and *severe* their *tempers* are, will, I am apt to think, ascribe their conduct rather to *superstition* or *conceit*, than simply to *integrity of heart* and a well *informed understanding*. Far would I be from discouraging a spirit of inquiry in all matters relating to Religion, and an ardent zeal in its defence. These are necessary to constitute Sincerity. I would only wish that zeal should be founded on proper principles, that it should be placed upon proper objects, and that it should be under the direction of *Prudence* and *Discretion*. Whilst therefore, we possess that *sincerity* of mind which will lead us, upon *proper* occasions, *boldly to profess* and vindicate, what appears to us, after the most diligent and impartial examination to be

the *Truth*, let us not mistake *Bigotry*, *Folly*, and *Prejudice*, for Sincerity; but let all our opinions be built on the solid foundation of reason and Scripture; let us unite with the wise and good in things important; indulge liberty in things indifferent, and exercise *unbounded charity* in all things.

Again, some persons, in order to make the world imagine that they are sincere, are much addicted to the *reproving of others for their faults.* Now, to reprove another with a prospect of success,—though this is one of the most indispensable and sacred duties of friendship, benevolence and Religion,—yet is it, perhaps, of all the duties which they require, the most delicate and difficult. To do it *unseasonably*, and in an *angry*, *impertinent* or *sour* manner, would seem as if we did it to *vent our* malice, or to *gratify our pride, and to please ourselves*, rather than to *do good to others.* It is indeed true, (and let the truth be deeply engraven on

our memories,) that *one grain* of integrity is worth all the *mere politeness* in the world. Whenever it becomes *necessary* or *highly proper* to speak an ungrateful truth, the *honest* man *will* speak it, whatever be the consequence. Set before him the highest worldly honours and advantages on the one side, and the interests of truth and virtue on the other, and he hesitates not a moment which he shall prefer; he is resolved to *maintain his integrity*, whatever it may cost him, and thinks that to forfeit his *innocence and honour*, or to have been guilty of one act of dissimulation, is the greatest misfortune which can possibly befal him. Nevertheless, as I before observed, to reprove others *unseasonably*, or in an *angry*, *impertinent* or *sour* manner, seems to argue malice or pride, and a desire of gratifying ourselves rather than of doing good to others. It must be confessed that honesty has often been alleged in excuse for rudeness and impertinence; but surely

though it may *extenuate*, it cannot *justify* them, unless it could be proved (which I hope it never can be) that in order to be possessed of *real integrity*, a man must be destitute of *civility*. Say, ye advocates for this rude sincerity, what are the reasons why honesty and virtue should appear in so *peculiar* and *forbidding* a light. Is this calculated to secure their reception in the world? or rather has it not a tendency entirely to banish them from it, especially in times when fashion is too much the rule of life. Modesty, good humour, and civility of manners may properly be considered as a sort of *polish*, which sets off piety and virtue to the greatest advantage. Let Sincerity, then, have every engaging appearance consistent with innocence and itself, to recommend it to mankind; let it have every thing which tends to *adorn* it, but at the same time, nothing to alter its nature, or *diminish* its excellence.

Once more, it has been reckoned by

some a proof of sincerity to *speak indiscriminately every thing which a person thinks.* But (although no doubt the contrary extreme is much the more common and the more fatal) should not this also be understood with some qualification? Otherwise may it not lead us to the most absurd and mischievous practices? To have an inviolable regard to *truth* in our whole conversation, so as never, never in one single instance, to violate it, is indeed that rare accomplishment, to which we should always direct our chief endeavours. But *unnecessarily to obtrude our sentiments*, which perhaps may be founded in ignorance or prejudice, upon all persons, and on all subjects, is the ready way to disturb the peace of society, and to banish tranquillity from our own breasts. What I mean upon this subject is, that Sincerity does not require that every weak person should be *always talking*; or that this virtue should be considered as a cloak for loquacity, rudeness or impertinence. A sincere man

will, upon no occasion whatever, not even to secure to himself the greatest worldly advantage, say a thing which he does *not* believe. But certainly there is a medium between speaking what we do *not* think, and upon all occasions, and in all companies speaking *all* we think. Again, a sincere man will, if he be firmly convinced that the good of his fellow-creatures, and the interests of Religion require it, *boldly declare all* the sentiments of his heart, utterly regardless of any consequences which may affect *himself*. *His prudence* will be a principle superior to that which has *self-interest* for its object: it will be a prudence founded upon a thorough knowledge of the human heart, which will teach him the true value of *ends*, and the best *means* of obtaining them. Such a principle of prudence as this should always go hand in hand with sincerity; they should, at all times, act in concert; the one employing itself in suggesting truth, and

the other teaching us when openly to declare it, and when to be silent.

I now proceed more directly, to *explain and recommend the virtue of Sincerity.* And I shall consider it as referring to *ourselves, our fellow-creatures,* and our *Maker.*

In the first place, there is such a thing as sincerity to *ourselves.* One would imagine that there was little need of arguments to persuade us to the practice of this part of Sincerity. Can it be supposed that any persons are, as it were, of a party against *their own best interest?* Surely if false to *all the world,* they will be true to themselves. Experience alas! teaches us far otherwise. Crafty knaves and sly hypocrites, in order to compass some bad end, use many arts to impose upon *God* and *man;* but there are no impositions so constantly used, as those which men practise upon *their own hearts.* Every

wicked person, who has not cast off all sense of shame, and all hope of the favour of God, is of this character. He would divide himself between his Maker and his lusts; or rather, he would give to his *God* a few *external* tokens of respect, and to his *Lusts* he would give his *Heart*. He would, if possible, have the *present* gains and pleasures of wickedness, without being thought, either by himself or others, *to be wicked*. This leads him, either to invent arguments to satisfy himself that those practices of which he is guilty, are not *so criminal* as is generally supposed, or else to *give false names* to several vices, as if thereby he could alter *their nature*. Thus, for instance, a person who is addicted to *drunkenness*, *lying*, *sensuality*, or the like, will endeavour to silence the remonstrances which conscience makes against his conduct, by such methods as these; he will at first, perhaps, endeavour to persuade himself, that he is guilty of these vices only in a trifling degree; that *others* of his acquaintance

are *much worse than himself;* that he is *secret* in his indulgences, and consequently that *his example* cannot have any very pernicious influence. Afterwards, when he becomes *more hardened* in sin, and *less fearful* of the effects of it, as he soon will be, he will perhaps endeavour to persuade himself, that the *temptation* which he is under to certain vices, is *greater* than he can resist — that his passions are part of his nature, and were given him to be indulged; and that consequently the practices in which he allows himself, are, in fact, *not sinful*, and would no longer be considered in that light, if it were not the interest of Priests and Politicians, that they should be so. The next step to this, is to destroy the idea of moral obligation, to banish from his mind all thoughts of God and Religion, and to call this, a *freedom from prejudice, the assertion of his native rights*, and *true Liberality*. By such means as these (and it is not an imaginary process) does the man who is insincere to *himself*, lull his

conscience to a fatal repose. If this be not the method which he adopts, he will perhaps endeavour to palliate his crimes, by giving them *names* which sound less harsh and offensive to the ear of Virtue. Thus *Intemperance* will be styled *Good Living*, and *a free indulgence in the bounties of Providence; Pride* will be termed a *commendable Spirit*, and a *proper regard for a man's own honour;* and *Covetousness* will be deemed *Prudence* or *Economy*. Now what is the reason that men are so ready to find out faults in *others*, and so forward to censure them, and at the same time so blind to themselves? It evidently is this, because they *have less partiality in one case than in the other*. Hurried away by the impetuosity of their passions, and, blinded by the mist which they cast before their eyes, they are led to "call evil good and good evil." It is not so indeed with respect to their *fellow-creatures*. *Their* faults they view through a medium which considerably *magnifies* them; whilst *their own* are viewed through a medium

which *scarcely renders them perceptible.* It is owing to this self-deception, that so many are encouraged to continue in the path of wickedness. It is likewise owing to the same partiality, that general instructions and indirect reproofs have so little effect, because each person is ready to apply them, rather to *every one about him* than to *himself.* So that if you would make persons understand you, you yourself must apply, you must *direct* reproof; taking the disagreeable method which the prophet Nathan did with David, who was constrained to say, "Thou art the Man." Happy would it be for men, if they would sometimes use a *little* wholesome severity with *themselves;* it would be much more effectual than if it came from *others;* it would render it indeed from every other quarter unnecessary. But though nothing is so important, nothing so useful, yet nothing is so uncommon as this self-discipline. Are we then desirous of being sincere and honest to ourselves? We must be frequently em-

ployed in the important business of self-examination; we must search deeply into every secret recess of the heart, endeavour to find out our *ruling passion*, and to understand our true character, so as neither to think *worse*, nor which is more common and much more dangerous, *better* of ourselves than we deserve. Nor let any one ever attempt to deceive himself, by a supposition, that drunkenness, that lying, that sensuality, and other vices of a similar nature, are *not sinful*. Whatever fallacious arguments a man may make use of to satisfy himself that they are not so, the nature of things is not altered by his opinion; the united voice of Reason and Religion proclaims their turpitude, and declares that those who indulge themselves in them, will, by a God of Purity and Justice, be consigned to the regions of darkness and misery. Let not any one forget that whatever *name* he may give to an *excessive indulgence of any of his animal appetites*, it is *Intemperance*, and will be punished as

such; let him not forget, that whatever *name* he may give to *too exalted an opinion of his own character*, it is *Pride*, and will be punished as such; and that whatever *name* he may give to an *inordinate desire of worldly riches*, it is *Covetousness*, and will be punished accordingly. All deceptions of this kind can affect only *ourselves*; and *we ourselves only* shall in the end experience the fatal consequences of them. *God*, the great Searcher of hearts, and the true Judge of human character, cannot possibly be thus deceived; He expects *Truth* in the inward parts, and if we are desirous of securing *his* approbation, we must be *perfectly honest and sincere*; we must keep every inferior passion in subjection to Reason and Conscience, and give full scope to the nobler and more generous principles of the soul. If we are desirous of inheriting "*eternal* Life," we must, as far as we are able, "keep *all* the commandments;" we must not make a reserve even of *one* sin, or an exception

to any *one* duty, aiming to be as wise, as good, and as holy as possible. This is the first branch of Sincerity, which is of the greatest importance, as it is the foundation of Justice, Piety, and every other virtue. Be but honest to *your own hearts*, and true to *your own* best interests, and you will be sincere and faithful to *God* and *Man*.

LECTURE XLIX.

HAVING, in a preceding Lecture, pointed out some instances in which Sincerity is counterfeited and affected, and described this quality as referring to *ourselves;* I now proceed to consider Sincerity as it respects *our fellow-creatures.* And in this view of it, it is the most important of all mental qualities. It essentially affects our whole conduct in private life, and upon the public theatre of the world. It intimately concerns us as parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintance, fellow-subjects, and men, and above all, as *Christians.* In whatever station we may be placed, or in whatever relation we may stand to others, if we are desirous of filling up the former with propriety, or performing

rightly the duties of the latter, it becomes us to be upright and sincere. To this end we ought never to *pretend* to any virtues or excellencies, which we do not really possess, nor assume any character which does not sit upon us easily and naturally. Truth, Simplicity, Fidelity, and Honour, are the dress in which Sincerity always appears. The man whose soul is thus adorned, will, in the general course of his conduct, be *open* and *unreserved*. Having nothing to conceal, he will not fear to have his character exposed to public view, and in order to be *thought* just and honest, benevolent, and pious, he will take care to be *really so*. In his dealings with his fellow-creatures, he will always discover a spirit of equity and generosity, and rise superior to all the arts of low cunning and sordid selfishness. The means which are too often made use of by the mere men of this world, to purchase the honours, the riches, and the enjoyments of this world, he will think are much *too dear* a

purchase. Such a person will, above all things, be careful, upon all occasions whatever, to speak the language of *Truth*. Not Temptation herself, in her most inviting form, will ever induce him to *prevaricate* with his conscience, or to be guilty of a *falsehood*. It will ever be the language of his heart, in dependence on the Divine assistance, "My integrity I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." In this manner will Sincerity manifest itself in our general conduct towards our fellow-creatures. But there is one particular instance, in which it will not fail to discover itself, and in which it will always appear in a striking and amiable light, and that is in the difficult and important affair of *commendation* and *reproof*. I mention this duty, because it is not sufficiently attended to. The sincere man, keeping this maxim in morals ever in his eye, that "the *obligation* and the *ability* are of equal extent," and remembering, that "he who

allows oppression, shares the crime," will, in this respect, as in all others, *do* all the good he *can* do. It is true, when we reprove a friend for his faults, we are often obliged to act contrary to inclination, private advantage, tenderness of disposition, and some of the strongest principles of our nature. Whoever then attempts to do good to another, at the expense of *his own* ease, pleasure, and interest, does by such self-denying virtue, give an unquestionable proof of his sincerity. He who is always ready to ascribe the praise due to a worthy action, though performed by a rival, or even by an enemy; and he who reproves his friend from a real necessity, and at the hazard of interest and friendship, has an undoubted right, in every instance of this kind, to be accounted a man of integrity. Such hard and costly proofs of virtue shew, that he prefers his Duty above every other consideration. But then in the business of reproof, in order to render it effectual, and convince the person reproved that

we are sincere, there is often great skill and address requisite, as well as resolution and integrity. It should evidently proceed, not from pride, ill-humour, or displeasure, but from necessity and goodwill; it should be guided by discretion, seasoned with tenderness and delicacy, and begin and end in the most disinterested Friendship. The person who reproves another, by this particular act, claims a superiority in an important respect, which is often painfully and unwillingly allowed him. He should therefore, if he be sincere, bring himself down to a level, as much as may be, with the person reproved; he should, at least, avoid all airs of superiority, and endeavour to cover the severity and forbidding aspect of reproof, with all the kind allowances of candour, and all the tender endearments of friendship. Upon the whole, when we see a fellow-creature, rushing upon destruction, whom we might perhaps stop in the midst of his career, by a few words speaking, nothing can

justify a timid and over-cautious silence; but then to zeal and sincerity, we are to add wisdom and kindness. By these means we may possibly save our brother; however, at all events, we shall have done every thing in our power to prevent his ruin, and shall have the delightful consciousness of having discharged our duty in an affair of the greatest difficulty and importance.

Having thus considered the virtue of Sincerity as it respects *ourselves* and *our fellow-creatures;* it remains, in the last place, that we describe Sincerity towards *our Maker.* And is it possible that any one should be insincere towards the *Almighty,* or impose upon the *Omniscient God?* It is impossible that any one should *actually deceive* Him, but it is to be feared that many *attempt* it; or at least in their conduct *towards Him,* practise Insincerity, in order to deceive *men.* If there be any who *pretend* to religious affections or principles which they do

not possess; who conceal an *evil intention* under the cloak of *Religion;* who, to procure worldly advantages, *profess* a religion which they do not *believe,* declare their assent to doctrines which they look upon to be erroneous, or join in, or sanction by their presence, a form of worship which they deem to be unscriptural; whatever such persons may think of themselves or whatever the world may think of them, certain it is that they are hypocritical and insincere, and what is worst of all, they "lie not unto men, but unto God." Whether there are such persons existing, or who they are, it is not for *us* to judge. This let us leave to be determined by that Being who looketh upon the heart. At the same time, to preserve *us* from such a conduct, let us ever remember that it is the worst and most dangerous species of hypocrisy, and that it argues the greatest insincerity towards *our Maker.* Accountable to God for the use of our *understanding* as well as of the other faculties which He has

given us, I would remind both believers and unbelievers, that a system of opinions, though *actually adopted*, which is the result of indolence, prejudice, interest, or any criminal passion, will, at the great day of accounts, be no excuse for a *bad conduct*, or for the omission of a duty which *might* have been known: and that if the question will not be asked us *what* we have believed? we must give a serious account, *why* we have believed or disbelieved. There is such a thing as "*denying* Christ before men." There is such a thing as "an evil *heart* of unbelief." But more particularly sincerity towards our Maker relates chiefly to acts of worship both public and private, and supposes that we perform them from the heart, "in spirit and in truth," without formality, ostentation or any view to interest, and as "to the Lord, and not unto man." A sincere worshipper does not aim to raise a character by noisy addresses to his Maker, but has his mind wholly engaged in these devout exercises; and whilst he

is in communion with God, is regardless of every earthly concern. "When thou prayest," says our Saviour, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." In this manner the sincere man behaves himself in *private* worship. And whenever he enters the house of God, it is with true humility; with a desire to express and improve the devotions of his heart, and with an habitual intention to recommend to the world by his example, a religion designed to promote the eternal happiness of mankind. His piety, at all times, both in public and in private, is very different from *sudden ecstacies* and *raptures* which proceed only from a *warm imagination*;

it is *steady* and *uniform*, being founded in the *heart*, and governed by an improved understanding. And above all, he proves and perfects his sincerity to God by *universal obedience*. This essential principle of Religion does not endeavour to separate *Piety* from *Morality*, but directs our attention to *all* the laws of God without distinction. The *upright* worshipper performs his duty to his *neighbour* and *himself* from a regard to the *Divine Authority*. He can never be tempted, by a prospect of secrecy and impunity, in any instance, to do his *neighbour wrong*. He speaks the truth and keeps his promise though to his own hurt; and is strictly just to all, especially to those who are unable to defend themselves, and have none but God for their avenger. In his whole conduct he looks up to *that Being* who is now his witness, and who will one day pass a decisive sentence upon every action of his life, and upon every thought of his heart.

To conclude, the *bare wish* to indulge in any unlawful gratification shows insincerity: it demonstrates that however pious and good we *profess and appear* to be, we are insincere in our *hearts.* In our affections God will have *no rival.* In the sacrifices of *Devotion* as well as *Liberality,* He requires an honest and cheerful giver; and through the whole course of life a steady perseverance in well doing, without any essential deviation from the laws of sobriety, righteousness and piety. This, let us pay Him, and it will be well with us both now and for ever. The *advantages* of sincerity will be the subject of the next and the last Lecture.

LECTURE L.

In the preceding Lectures, I endeavoured to explain the *nature of Sincerity*, as it refers to *ourselves*, our *fellow-creatures*, and our *Maker*. In this concluding Lecture, I shall offer *some arguments and motives*, to the practice of this most comprehensive and important of all virtues.

Before I proceed to display the excellence of Sincerity, and to point out the advantages of which it is productive, let me remind you not to be prejudiced against it, on account of its *plain* and *homely* appearance. Perhaps the virtue which I am most solicitous to recommend, is not conspicuous in circles composed of the gay and fashionable part of mankind. Perhaps, after you have

sought in vain for Sincerity in the lofty palaces of the great, you may find her retired to the humble dwelling of the unpolished mechanic, or the artless rustic. She is, however, at all times and in every situation, worthy your highest regard. Like a precious stone, Sincerity is to be valued for its *intrinsic worth and excellence*, though like it, a certain *polish* may be necessary to display its lustre and set it off to the best advantage. But though this is the case, let it be ever carefully remembered, that all the studied formality of artificial politeness, all the dignity and gracefulness which appear in courts, all the advantages which birth and fortune can bestow, if sincerity be wanting, are insufficient to render a character complete. Superior wisdom, or eminence of rank or power, may call forth the *external* tokens of respect, but that tribute of voluntary applause which proceeds immediately from the *heart* is paid only at the shrine of Integrity. To whatever the world may annex the ideas of noble,

or honourable, there is great truth in the observation of the poet:

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."

Sincerity, therefore, stands recommended to us by its *native worth* and *intrinsic excellence.* The path of Sincerity, before the heart is corrupted, is a *natural* and *easy* path. Convinced I am that if we follow the natural dictates of our own minds as well as consult our ease and tranquillity in life, we shall in all respects be honest and sincere. Virtue and righteousness are *straight* and *evident* paths, so that persons of the meanest capacity, with an upright intention, cannot err therein. On the contrary, the ways of injustice and deceit are infinitely various and uncertain, full of intricate mazes, and many obscure and perplexed windings. Whatever may be thought, it has been proved by all who have made the trial, that to play the hypocrite successfully is not an *easy*, but a *very difficult* task. How many have we known, who

after having laid such schemes to impose upon mankind as in their judgment afforded the fairest prospect of success, have, by one single act of imprudence or forgetfulness, discovered the imposture, and in consequence hereof, been exposed to the world in their proper colours! There is something in the countenance, something in the language, something in the tone and manner, which to persons of intelligence and penetration will discover the *real man*. I believe the world forms a more accurate judgment of men's characters in general, at least of the imperfections of them, than they themselves are apt to imagine. Upon this account, common prudence and a regard to self-interest alone would naturally lead us to be honest and sincere. Integrity is a plain and easy road; and though, perhaps, it is not always the *shortest*, it is nevertheless in general the *surest* way to peace, comfort, and happiness in this world; in the same manner as he who keeps constantly forward in an open and

a straight path, is in less danger of mistaking his way, than he who climbs over rocks and precipices in hopes of arriving sooner at his journey's end.

Further, as the path of Sincerity is plain and easy, so it has likewise a *natural security.* It is the freest from danger, and according to the natural constitution of things, is the least liable to disappointment. The general plan of Divine Providence is such, that the safety of mankind and the peace of the world cannot possibly be maintained without some degree of sincerity among men. And it has been found by experience, that in those times and countries, where this virtue has been *least* practised, so much the nearer have things drawn to a final dissolution. The general causes, likewise, of *particular* persons' misfortunes, lie manifestly in their own imprudence and irregularity; and the ruin of most men is evidently owing to their own unjust and wicked practices. Now, if this

be the truth of the case, (which I think undeniable) then, the most important of all practical maxims is, "he that walketh uprightly walketh surely," and the common proverb is of all sayings least liable to exception, "Honesty is the best policy." When we are well assured that a person uniformly acts from a *good intention*, we are immediately disposed to look upon his errors with candour, and to throw a veil over those foibles which belong to his character as a partaker of humanity. The man, therefore, who is desirous of securing to himself the esteem of the world, and all the advantages which result from the good opinion of others, instead of practising the arts of fraud, dissimulatiom and imposture; instead of being guilty of flattery, servility and meanness, will at all times "speak the truth from his heart;" and though he promise to his own hurt, he will perform his promise with fidelity.

Moreover, the sincere and honest man

may hope for the particular *favour and friendship of Almighty God.* Nor is this a presumptuous hope, or built upon a weak and sandy foundation. It is founded upon the promise of God Himself. We find in the oracles of truth many such declarations as these: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully; he shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." It is true, indeed, under the Gospel dispensation which "brings life and immortality to light," the exact distribution of rewards and punishments is reserved to a *future* state. We are not, therefore, to expect that *now* the Deity will interfere in a peculiar manner, and by remarkable providences secure the prosperity of upright men in the *present* state. It is, however, in general true that "godliness hath the promise of the life that *now*

is," as well as of "that which is to come." And it is still evident by experience, that religious and upright men do *more generally* secure to themselves the *real comforts and enjoyments of life*, and meet with *fewer disappointments* than those who endeavour to accomplish their designs by unjust and deceitful practices. It is not disputed, that whilst the world is so corrupt, Sincerity may expose a man to some *temporal* inconveniences; but when *all accounts* are settled, and the *sum total* cast up, and particularly if the internal state of the mind be taken into consideration, even in *this* world, the upright man has, in all cases, the advantage. In those instances in which a man suffers for his integrity, he is not without his sources of consolation. He has this for his consolation, that "his hope is not in this life only." He has before him the prospect of a *future* and a *better* life, and this expectation is so glorious and transporting as to enable him to "enjoy the pangs of death and

smile in agony;" it is so glorious and transporting as to render the *truly upright man* evidently *more happy*, even under the severest persecutions, than his persecutors can be in their greatest power and triumph. Thus, the upright man, from the beginning to the end of life, whatever may be his external circumstances, has manifestly the advantage over the hypocrite, and has chosen the better, the wiser part.

This leads me to observe, as another motive to Sincerity, how vastly the advantage is on its side in the hour of *death* and in the *day of judgment*. A frequent and serious meditation upon these awful events will naturally make us sincere to ourselves, to our fellow-creatures, and to God. Hypocrisy, as much as it may be practised, is (as observed already) no part of true wisdom in *this world*. A guilty conscience often recoils upon men with terror; often does it imbitter their sweetest comforts, deprive

them of all peace by day, and haunt them, like a spectre in the night. And were this inward monitor silent, and if men who practised deceit had nothing to fear but a discovery of their fraud, the probability of this, and the infamy and disgrace which it would inevitably bring upon them, would render it their interest to be sincere. But if we regard a world *to come*, all arts and disguises are inexpressible folly, because *hereafter* "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good or evil." Our Saviour Himself cautions us against hypocrisy upon this very consideration. "Beware," says He, of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy; for there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, nothing hidden which shall not be known." This consideration should surely dispose us to be sincere in all our words and actions; it should engage us, if we speak at all, to speak what we think; if we promise at all, to perform what we promise,

and in all things to appear to the *world*, as we do to the Omniscient God, *what we are.*

But the wisdom of the *upright* man's choice appears still more complete, by considering the *greatness and the happiness of Heaven*, and the *conditions* upon which it is to be obtained. Could I describe to you the blessedness of the celestial world, I doubt not that the thought of it would influence you immediately to use those means which are necessary to obtain it. But this is denied me. It is all that an immortal being can enjoy or hope for. It is in its nature pure and unalloyed; it is in duration eternal. When millions of ages have run their rounds; when as many millions of ages as there are sands on the shore, or drops in the ocean are elapsed; even then eternity will be but beginning: even then the bliss of Heaven will afford as much satisfaction to the mind as at first. It is bliss unspeakable and full

of glory: it is bliss which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. And *by what methods* is this felicity to be obtained? I answer, without the least reservation, *by a life of uprightness and sincerity.* That Being who originally formed us, and who is well acquainted with all the powers of our nature, as well as the temptations to which we are exposed, does not (whatever may have been said to the contrary) require from such creatures as we are, *absolute perfection.* But *Sincerity* he *does* require; and *nothing less* than *that Sincerity* which, under a sense of accountableness to God, I have endeavoured faithfully to explain, *will be sufficient* to secure his favour. This is *absolutely indispensable* in every being capable of moral obligation; and *more* than this an *angel* cannot pay. I acknowledge, without any reserve, that we have no claim to eternal felicity on the *merit* of our obedience. The blessing proceeds entirely

from the *free grace of God.* But that a *sincere obedience* is the appointed condition to be complied with on our part, to render us partakers of it, is a truth of which I have not a shadow of a doubt myself, and which I cannot but consider as of the first practical importance. We may, and ought to entertain the most exalted opinion of the free grace of God, and, properly understood, of the merits of Christ. But, at the same time, it would be of much greater use to us to *comply* with those *terms*, which are proposed in the Gospel, as the *conditions* of our obtaining that happiness which originally proceeded from the free grace of God, and was confirmed to us by the death and resurrection of Christ, than to be always dwelling in our minds on the plan and operation of the Divine dispensations. Let it ever be remembered that in the affair of *our own* salvation, *we ourselves* have an important part to act. And it would be of much more use to us to consider *what that*

part is, and to be *careful to perform it*, than to be perpetually insisting on what has been done by God and Christ. And let it be deeply engraven on our memories, and influence every part of our conduct, that *Sincerity is the only condition of Salvation.* As certainly as that there is a God, and that He concerns Himself in the government of the world; as certainly as that vice is odious, and virtue well pleasing in his sight; as certainly as that He will reward those who obey his laws, and punish those who trangress them, so certain it is that the *sincere* and *upright* will be fully recompensed at the final judgment of the great day—that day when God will judge the secrets of all men by Jesus Christ. Then will plainness and sincerity appear of genuine worth, and the craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive, be stripped of every disguise. All specious pretensions; all the methods of falsehood will then be disclosed before men and angels, and no artifices whatever be able to con-

ceal or palliate iniquity. In a word, the artful, ill-designing men of this world will then, with shame be convinced, that *simplicity* of character and *uprightness* of conduct is the *true wisdom*, and that those *crafty* and *dishonest* arts which they so highly esteemed, were in reality the *greatest folly*. Then shall it appear to all rational beings, that the fear of the Lord that only is wisdom, and to depart from evil that alone is understanding.

As the practical use of the whole—thankful indeed shall I be if these Lectures may have induced any to form the resolution and to act upon it—let us be sincere to *ourselves*, to our *fellow-creatures* and to *our Maker*. Should art and disguise, hypocrisy and deceit prevail in the times in which we live, (and sorry I am to say they do too much prevail,) let us each dare to be singular, and strive to be eminent in the support and practice of Integrity. Whatever others may do, let us always act upon the nicest and

strictest principles of equity and honour in our whole behaviour to our fellow-creatures, and be ready to forego any advantage, and to submit to any hardship, rather than forfeit our character for truth and sincerity. In all cases where we have the *least doubt* upon our minds, let it be an invariable rule to act upon the *safest* side with respect to Integrity: although in direct opposition to *our own present feeling or interest.* "Infamous and contemptible," says an ancient writer, "is that race of men who will do a thing when they have a *doubt* on their minds whether it be right or not." Surely, the *Christian* standard of morality ought not to be lower than that which a *Heathen* proposed to himself. The man, in this case, that deliberates, that doubts, is lost: the probability is that he will soon lose both his *doubts* and his *integrity.* Let it then be the fixed and governing principle of our lives that we will, in the midst of the greatest temptations, hold fast our integrity, and never, upon any

account whatever, even to gain the whole world, depart from a good conscience, that our hearts may not reproach us so long as we live. May God enable us to adhere to this resolution, that we may pass through life in innocence and peace, and hereafter be admitted into the mansions of perfect virtue and never-ending felicity.

THE END.

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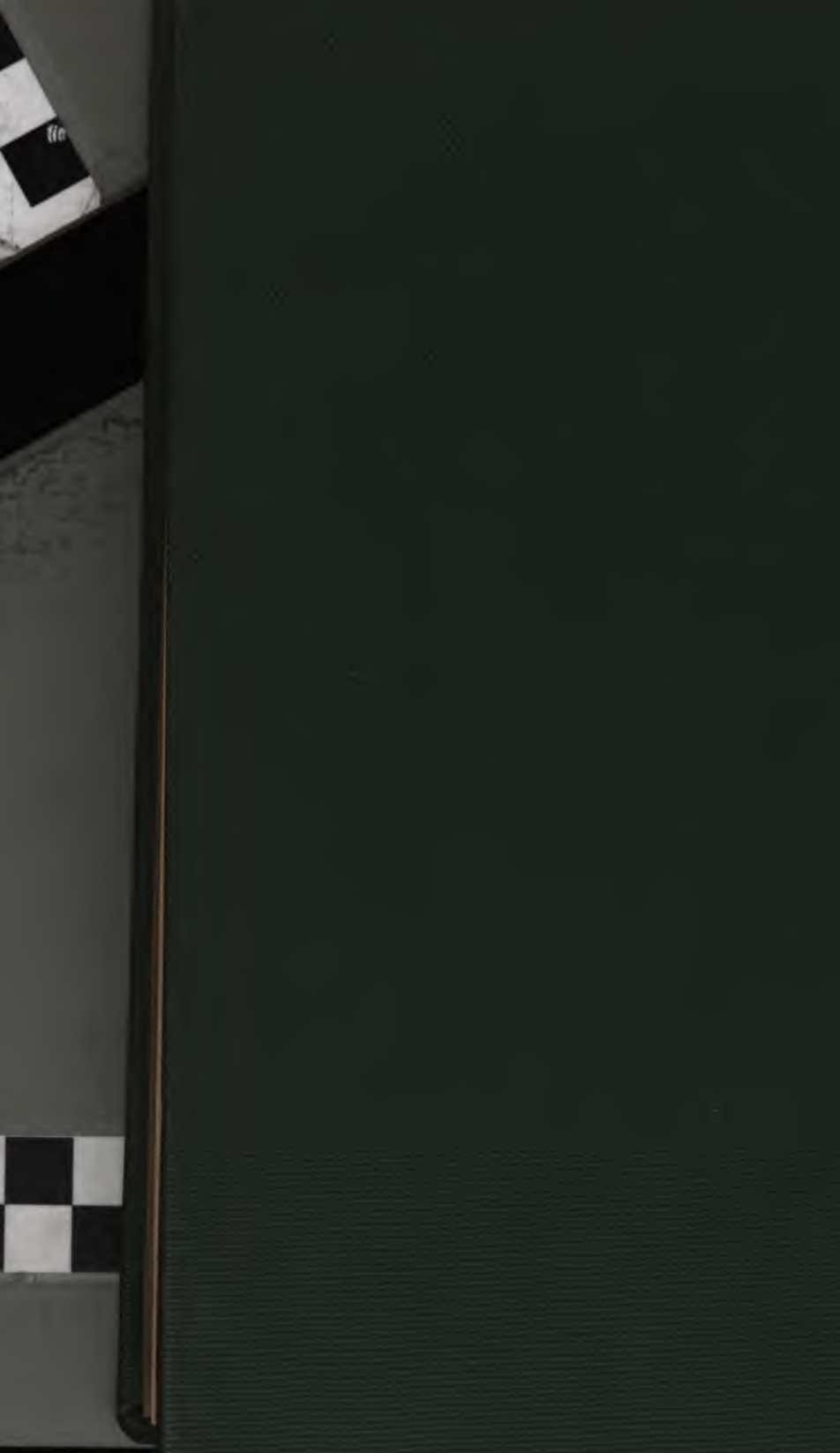
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